MIGRANTS OF THE STARS

A. H. BARZEVI
IN COLLABORATION WITH
MARC. F. KELLER

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Migrants of the Stars

by

A.H. Barzevi & Marc F. Keller

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MIGRANTS OF THE STARS

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In thankful appreciation for all they have done
to bring this book to the public,
I am happy to dedicate it to

HARRY MANDEL
and
WILLIAM APTAIKER

A. H. B.

BRIEF CHRONOGRAPHY OF THE MANUSCRIPT

Shortly after the war an old American antiquarian, seeking bargains in impoverished Europe, attended the sale of the personal effects of a retired naval celebrity, Sir Howard Banks, at a London auction house. Among other things he purchased, for £2, and iron box which contained a very yellowish old book.

A superficial examination showed it to be a diary, and convinced the antiquarian that he was poorer by £2 for buying it. The script of the diarist was so forbidding that no effort was made to read through the entire volume, and the manuscript was permitted to rot in a forgotten corner for ten years. Quite by accident, as I was browsing one day in the library of this antiquarian, I picked the yellowed book up and, as journalists sometimes will, I examined the last pages first.

To tell the tale briefly, I discovered soon that in the middle of this volume of unimportant jottings about military life and its duties, its author, the commander of a British military post in East Africa, began a record of a most extraordinary—indeed, an unequaled—adventure that befell him. This story so profoundly impressed me that I was convinced, as its author had been, that the world ought to have it.

After arranging the matter with the antiquarian who owned the manuscript, I called in a young journalistic friend to assist me in preparing it for publication. The result of our efforts is in this book, with the author's story very little changed.

My collaborator joins me in the prediction that the story of Major Sepsafem's adventure will not only impress the reader deeply but will move him as it has done its grateful editors.

A. H. B.

MAJOR SEPSAFEM'S PREFACE

You have probably never heard of the land of Niames.

No geography describes it, no map locates it, no book of travel or exploration mentions it; but this land, so oddly named, exists, as the story narrated in this book bears witness. It is a land of countless wonders, challenging the imagination; wonders that may appear to be the fancies and fantasies of the maddest of dreamers, but which the author guarantees to be truthful facts.

But let the story bring its own conviction. Let the reader form his own opinion about all there is in it.

S.

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CHAPTER ONE
THRESHOLD OF THE UNKNOWN

Why they call me Sepsafem—My flight—My perilous descent—How I awoke and saw myself sleeping—The strange scene of Nimikahara—The man Unatalcus—A conversation without sound or motion—‘This is no dream!’

C1. Sepsafem may sound like an uncommon name for a British soldier. I hasten to explain that it was an appellation acquired among the small group of whites living in the British East African possession where I have command of the military station. My real name does not matter. Because people think me very peculiar in some of my ideas—which differ greatly from their own—they call me by the singular nickname of Sepsafem which means, in the dialect of our dusky natives, something equivalent to the cockney expression “queer ’un”. And this name appears to suit me better than any other.

I may add that this nickname came to me mainly on account of my persistent experimenting with the construction of a flying device. For full fifteen years, since I was joined to the small military unit in this almost forgotten colony, I occupied my leisure—which means a good deal of time —with chemistry and the science and art of flying. I constructed several original balloon models

and produced a lighter than air gas of great promise. This was enough reason for the natives to regard me as peculiar, and my white comrades believe much the same thing. For aviation is yet in its infancy, and in this far off comer of the globe, almost cut off from civilization, we are disinclined to credit such reports of progress in this field as occasionally reach us.

C2. In the latter part of the year 18— I succeeded in completing my first fully equipped balloon, ready to try out. But I had to be my own commander, pilot and passenger. Not one of my friends exhibited the least inclination to accompany me on what they regarded as a suicidal attempt—especially as I gave it out that the steering apparatus I had invented was to be attached only after the first trip, when I had learned just how this balloon

behaved in the air. In the absence of any means for controlling the direction of the balloon, and not wishing to be carried to any distance, I chose a quiet day, very summery, and with hardly any wind at all, for the ascension. I informed no one in advance, not even my orderly, and left behind none of the usual farewells; for I expected to descend nearby after a flight of only an hour or so.

Much to my surprise the balloon rose rapidly to an unexpected altitude where it was caught up in a considerable atmospheric disturbance. I had been so enraptured by the panorama that unfolded itself beneath me while my balloon was mounting towards the azure skies that I failed to notice what was happening to the guide rope of my ballonet. When I sought this to start the balloon downward I was dismayed to see only a small end fluttering cockily in the wind. The rest of it had somehow become entangled in the network above me, well out of reach.

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What a more ingenius man might have done in my place I do not know, but as for me, I found myself utterly helpless in the face of this misfortune. There was nothing for it but to pray that the wind would disentangle my guide rope before a catastrophic fate overtook me. In the meantime I saw myself being carried on over vast distances, above forests and waters, with no apparent abatement of speed. The wind, whistling past me with such shrill velocity that I could not grasp my breath, made it necessary to hide my head at the bottom of the basket. After some hours I noticed that the air had become freezing cold and uncomfortably rare. This condition soon took on such intensity that I thought in desperation to jump out of the compartment to immediate death, for my suffering was unendurable. But I was now so weak and exhausted that I lacked the strength to stand up.

Days it seemed that I had lain thus in a semi-conscious state when suddenly I became aware of a powerful jerk, as if something had struck the balloon from above, and I realized that it was falling at a tremendous speed. The prospect of being smashed to pieces after all I had suffered induced a frenzied effort on my part to rise and try to save myself. I must have succeeded in regaining my feet, for the last thing I remembered was a vision of the ground about to strike up at my unfortunate balloon.

C3. What happened then, and how long I remained unconscious, I do not know. When I awoke I found myself in a surprising condition and among

the most unusual sort of humans.
It was in a large orchard. Underneath each one of several fruit trees slept a white-garbed person of unfamiliar

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appearance. I recognized myself among them, asleep under a tree—and yet I was standing, alive and fully conscious, face to face with a number of interesting strangers. What was more wonderful, I spoke to them, and they to me, in a language totally unfamiliar, without words or sounds. They asked me various questions that I answered as freely as if I were talking in the King's English. Their inquiries concerned themselves chiefly with my arrival. They were curious to know whence I had come and why, what had brought me, what had happened to me while I was flying, and so forth.

My immediate impression was that I must be dead or dreaming. I had a profound feeling, however, based on no apparent good reason, that I was well awake. Consequently I sensed the mystery of my standing separated from my own body, and conversing without the use of real language, in an uncomfortable state of mind. I felt, too, that the strangers about me were real humans whose language, in no way resembling my own, I had somehow mastered thoroughly—when, I could not guess.

While engaged in replying to their numerous questions, I had time to look around me in every direction. The things I saw increased my surprise and mystification a thousandfold. I was, apparently, upon a tropical island of not inconsiderable dimensions, yet I could see it from end to far end in every direction. Scores of miles of land and sea were within the scope of my suddenly abnormal eyes. I beheld clearly every distant pond, tree, flower—just as if they were right beside me. Was I dreaming? But this went beyond the nature even of dreams! Had I then been killed? Then these must be ghosts!

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Directing my gaze heavenward, as if to seek there some clue to these bewildering enigmas, served only to augment my amazement and awe. In the clear daylight it seemed that the whole atmosphere was densely populated with a large variety of creatures—some of which—animals, birds, reptiles, and insects—I recognized, whilst others represented types

wholly unknown to me. It was the most novel sight I had ever witnessed—defying all description. It was perhaps similar to the scene one would behold lying face up on the bottom of an ocean of clear water; innumerable creatures would flash in confusing order hither and thither in the miles of water extending up to the surface, their shapes distorted by the broken light.

All this time, however, I was aware that I stood firmly on grassy dry land, amidst many fine fruit trees, in the company of a number of frankly inquisitive, but withal most dignified, persons. I could move freely—indeed, more so than usual—and see and hear better than ever before. In short, I seemed to be alive and awake in all my senses, fully conscious of myself and my very extraordinary surroundings, especially of the fact that I was standing beside my own sleeping body—so that there appeared rather to be two of me. More than all else, however, I was bothered to understand the fact that I had been conversing with real human beings in a fully comprehensible language without the aid of words, signs or sounds; as if I were reading their minds and answering their every question in my own mind. Impressed though I was with the reality of my being awake, this fact alone inclined me to conclude that I had indeed fallen into the oddest imaginable dream, or had died in the crash of my balloon.

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C4. My first awareness, after I regained consciousness, of the presence of others like myself came when I perceived, in the midst of observing the inexplicable phenomena of the locality, that someone was calling to me.

"Unatalcus to the stranger: Are you awake?"

This message suddenly impinged itself upon my mind, though I heard nothing and saw not whence or from whom it came. But when I received it again, I replied suddenly in the strange fashion of the locality, mentally issuing the message, "Sepsafem to Unatalcus: I am awake. I am troubled."

Instantly the reply came, "Unatalcus to Sepsafem: Be at ease. Wait where you are."

Shortly after, a number of venerable men arrived and began the interview which I have described. But thus far, and whilst a myriad of thoughts and impressions were crowding into my mind, the discourse with the islanders had been rather one sided. All the questions had been theirs, and all the answers mine. By their friendly manners I judged that they would give me gladly any information I sought, but politeness forbade me

to yield to the urge of my,own curiosity until my hosts had been satisfied. At last my patience was rewarded. The opportune moment came when I might ask them to enlighten me, if they could, at least to some extent. I therefore addressed them briefly by directing my thoughts freely to them all, first giving my own identity according to their fashion.

"Sepsafem to my friendly Masters: I have explained my presence here to the best of my knowledge, and I have informed you about my own person. Will you now be kind enough to reciprocate by telling me whom it is I have the honor to meet under these strange circumstances,

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and what place this is? Can you tell me whether this be dream or death?"

At these words my hosts all smiled kindly. One, he who had asked the most questions and seemed to be an elder among them, replied.

"Unatalcus to Sepsafem: Certainly! We shall comply with your wish, honored guest. We shall be glad indeed to tell you about ourselves and this place. There is no secret attached to it. You shall know everything. But first I may assure you that this is neither dream nor death. You are alive and awake. You are in the midst of veriest reality."

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CHAPTER TWO
THE ISLE OF ALL OCEANS

The people of Nimikahara—Their marvelous science—Appearance of Sir Howard's ship—My ego asserts itself—I learn of Niames—The control-house—How I was given nourishment.

C1. "By a strange stroke," continued he who gave his identity as Unatalcus, "you have landed upon Nimikahara, the Island of All Oceans. You are our first uninvited guest—but welcome no less on that account. For you are not an intruder, and we judge you to be a man of discretion."

"Sepsafem to Unatalcus and his companions: I thank you for these kind words. But now may I ask about the person who sleeps so deeply near that tree? It seems he resembles me markedly. Is it a pure coincidence that I find here one who might well be my twin?"

"Unatalcus to Sepsafem, freely: You will, I am afraid, undergo some astonishment when I declare that yonder sleeping body is your own—"

"Sepsafem to Unatalcus, freely: Sir! in God's name do not keep me longer in suspense. This unaccustomed bewilderment will unbalance me. Explain your statement logically or confess that you are trying to humor a poor unfortunate whose faculties have been deranged in a terrible accident."

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"Unatalcus to Sepsafem, freely: Be not impatient, honored guest. You will understand all this soon enough. I must tell you that we are learned in sciences unknown to our fellow-men. Among our important achievements is the science of separating our conscious spiritual selves from the physical body whilst the body is kept in a state of sleep. We can thus live, at our convenience, unencumbered by the earthly body in which we are born.

"Finding you unconscious near your shattered balloon, we separated your spirit-self from your clay body by a process common to our egoölogists. Your own real self, the same individual being that dared attemp to conquer the air, is now listening to me. Only your clay body, with the burden of its limitations, is not upon you. There it lies helpless until you choose to rejoin it. And now are you satisfied that your faculties are in order, and that you need no humoring?"

“Sepsafem to all: Verily, I am too awed by this information, with all it implies, to grasp it fully. But as I have always thought the human to consist of body and spirit, I understand it partially. I imagine too that the paradox of our conversing without words or sounds is to be explained by our non-physical condition. Am I right?”

“Unatalcus to Sepsafem, freely: Well perceived! Being divested of our bodies we have no physical instruments for the emission of sounds. But they are useless to us. Our spiritual selves discern instantly what others desire in their minds to convey to us. We as much as read one another’s thoughts, signaled mutually in the language of thought which has no words or sounds. Should we rejoin our bodies we could no longer understand one the other. It was, in fact, our curiosity to

learn the events by which fate has contrived to interrupt our seclusion that prompted us to disrobe your ego and ours. Only thus could we communicate freely with you. Now that it is evident a will higher than your own has directed you hither, we shall be glad to make you one of us or arrange for your restoration to your native land. Command us, for we are at your service.”

Our own language of limited words is far inadequate to express the emotions I felt upon learning these facts. I was dismayed, at first, by the maze of new possibilities opened up by this knowledge. For a moment I thought the best use I could make of my opportunity was to ask to be returned bodily to my own countrymen so that I might make public this marvelous discovery. But at once I realized how much more I had to learn, and I deter mined to stay as long as possible in this wondrous land. Fearing, therefore, to lose the esteem of the natives by an exhibition of unseemly inquisitiveness, I hesitantly sought a way to question my learned host.

“Sepsafem to Unatalcus, freely: What you have said about our mode of intercourse is quite clear to me. I recall now that our thinking is without words, for often we have difficulty in commanding words to express our thoughts. I find it interesting to speculate on the fact, not commonly understood, that all humans, of all races and lands, think in one universal soul-language.”

“Unatalcus to Sepsafem, freely: You have understood it rightly. We do not think in words. But in the body, because we cannot communicate the

flow of thought from enclosed mind to enclosed mind, we must invent sounds and words to represent our thought more or less accurately."

"Sepsafem to Unatalcus, freely: Will you permit me now to ask another question? The name of your

land is foreign to my ears. We Britons have never heard of Nimikahara. What is its location and why is it unknown to men?"

"Unatalcus to Sepsafem, freely: Without desire to wound your national pride, I must say that if our comparatively small domain has escaped the searching eyes of many explorers it has been due to our specific care to remain hidden from our fellow-men, and, frankly, from you Britons in particular. Our sole reason for cherishing this seclusion is the necessity to keep certain sciences we know a secret from mankind, which is not yet ready to use them wisely,—sciences which men would employ only to annihilate one another with; and the desire to avoid all bloodshed on our own part. For in the present undeveloped state of mankind it is certain our fellow-men would not keep their peace with a people as strange, as small and as different from themselves as we. Hence contact with them would mean either some form of subservience to a greater power or, since we have power enough to defy all the military forces of the world, maintenance of a state of hostility—with perhaps occasional bloodshed on our part, which we eschew and shun at all costs. As for our calling this the Island of All Oceans, it is the truth. We float Nimikahara wherever we please, and by this means avoid meeting ships."

"Sepsafem to Unatalcus, freely: I see there is no end of mystifications connected with this land. When I ascended in my balloon, w'hich no doubt I inadvertently filled with a wrong mixture of gases, I never thought to be overtaken by an adventure so marvelous. Since Heaven has preserved me from an untimely death and placed me among friends, I have much to be thankful for. But pray tell me how came you upon this island

and to what family of mankind you trace yourselves, if there be no secret attached to that."

“Unatalcus to Sepsafem, freely: My friend, once we have made you welcome in our midst there are no secrets between us. You need but ask concerning anything that troubles your mind. We shall gladly inform you. We are the members of a small tribe descended from Prophets of antiquity. Our forefathers settled upon this floating island in ancient times. Here we have developed an individual civilization. We have made scientific discoveries beyond the ken of the rest of mankind. When people began to sail widely in ships we arranged a device to control our course and to propel the island at a speed to insure our distancing the fastest ship. We are prepared even to protect ourselves against intrusion by air—which may become frequent in the not distant future. But we desired not to let you drop into the ocean to untimely death.”

“Sepsafem to Unatalcus, freely: For this I must thank you, though I hardly know how. Evidently I must accustom myself not to be astonished at anything that I learn in this land of surprises.”

At this point we were interrupted by the arrival of one who evidently was an official of some sort. Making his excuses briefly, he announced that a large frigate was approaching directly in the path of the Isle. It was, he declared, only a day’s distance at its best apparent speed.

C2. My hosts were not a bit excited by this intelligence. It was evident, though, that they were curious to examine the ship. Their chieftain signaled his assent, whereupon they departed at once, leaving me alone with him.

“Unatalcus to Sepsafem: And you? Would you not like to see this ship?”

“Sepsafem to Unatalcus: To confess the truth, I am uncomfortably agitated by the approach of this frigate. It may be a ship of my own country. I should certainly be glad to see it.”

“Unatalcus to Sepsafem: Come with me to one of the observatories. You shall gratify your wish at once.”

We proceeded out of the orchard and along a splendid road, lined with impressive trees, leading toward the center of the island. We ‘arrived in a few minutes before a tall structure of large white stones. Entering through an open door we mounted a flight of stairs, I going through the motions of walking whilst my friend simply moved forward without touching the ground. I found, after a little experimenting, that I could do likewise, but it

was some time before I accustomed myself to this convenient means of locomotion without feeling ill at ease.

Arrived upon the roof of the building, I beheld several telescopes unlike any used in Europe arranged in a circle upon the crest of the tower. They were round in shape and consisted merely of a large shiny lense, about a foot in diameter and not more than half an inch thick, framed in metal. Upon the top of each frame were mounted three smaller lenses, none more than two inches in diameter. Each telescope was mounted securely upon a thin pedestal. There was no need to manipulate any of them, for they were focused so that every point of the compass was within the range of at least two of them. I was quite delighted to find the quality of the telescopes unsurpassable. Although the island at the time was being enveloped in a thick fog, I could

make the ship out as clearly as in bright sunlight. It was a large frigate, unmistakably a British Man-o-war. I discovered soon that by means of the smaller lenses I could make out the minutest details of objects sighted in the larger. It is difficult to describe my excitement when I beheld, pacing the quarterdeck with nervous strides, my own uncle, Sir Howard Banks! I had not seen him, my mother's only brother, for years, though I entertained a lively affection for him. Now to behold him under these circumstances was more than I could endure.

Fortunately my venerable friend stood by my side. His presence reminded me that I must not give way to my emotions. But I could not help saying, "Sepsafem to Unatalcus: This is an astounding coincidence. The commander of that ship is my own uncle."

"Unatalcus to Sepsafem: Should you desire it, I can arrange for you to board the frigate."

Happily as I was on the point of answering in the affirmative a second thought came to my mind. Why should I leave Nimikahara now since I had received assurance that they could at any time restore me to my country? Moreover I understood that I could not give Sir Howard a sensible explanation of my sudden appearance in this locality when I was supposed to be in Africa. He would probably conclude I had gone mad on account of some extraordinary misadventure if I told him about the Isle of All Oceans. I therefore, not without some regret, declined the islander's good natured offer.

“Sepsafem to Unatalcus: With your kind permission my choice shall be to stay on for a little while. I hope I may be able to increase the poor store of my knowledge to some extent among you—if it is not more than I have a right to expect.”

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“Unatalcus to Sepsafem: My permission has ah ready been granted in the form of an invitation. But it will be about time to change our location. I shall go to the control-house to see what course we are taking hence. You may join me if you wish.”

“Sepsafem to Unatalcus: With pleasure. I am curious to see the instruments wherewith you propel a whole island at a speed unattainable by one of Her Majesty’s fastest frigates. But isn’t it strange how this fog has suddenly developed on a sunny day—and just in time to hide you nicely from the ship’s spy-glasses?”

My companion gave me a very broad smile.

“Unatalcus to Sepsafem: I don’t wonder you think it a coincidence. The fact is that this is no real fog but a disguise in which we enwrap ourselves on just such occasions. We release a harmless chemical from outlets all around the shore, and lo! While we can look out and see all about us, the approaching ship shuns this seemingly thick fog like a pest!”

We descended the way we had come up and took a new road, as beautiful as the first, leading further inland. Around us were beautiful homes of a strange architecture, varying in design and size and colors. In the gardens were laid out gorgeous beds of flowers, many of them dissimilar to any I had seen before. Here and there I saw men or women seated at tables under trees in these gardens, engaged apparently in study or amusement. In other gardens I saw men, women and children at work, at study, or at play. I marveled at the appearance of these people—so beautiful were their features, so splendid their physique. For I saw them in the clay—not as I was, disbodied. I must say that nowhere had I seen a race as handsome as the people of Nimikahara. Nor, indeed, had I seen a country as beautiful, happy,

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and healthy. These observations, and the delicious odors of the gardens that lined our course on both sides made me cease to reflect whether I had not

erred in rejecting an opportunity to return to my country. Instead it focused my thoughts upon a fresh mystification.

How, I wondered, was it possible for me in my present non-physical condition to experience all the emotions I had recently gone through? I had accepted the islander's explanation that I was my own spirit, divested of my earthly body. I had heard vague and mysterious rumors, even in England, of similar things—of the ghosts of dead people returning to earth for some purpose. I had never credited these superstitions. I did not credit them now. But I recognized in view of my present condition that the separation of body and spirit was a possibility. Nevertheless I had not conceived of spirits smelling the odors of flowers; and I could not understand why in my purely spiritual state I should be subject to all the emotions of physical humans, or how it was at all possible. For I had by now begun to discern in myself the unmistakable signs of ravenous hunger!

Again I began to doubt the reality of my experience. I determined to question my companion forthrightly. I resolved, too, that if he overcame my present difficulties I should acknowledge finally the verity of my adventure. Rather to my surprise the islander smiled in a way that indicated his amusement at my apologetic questions. I grasped that he must regard my ignorance as quite elementary. But I waited patiently for his reply which came after some hesitation.

"Unatalcus to Sepsafem: It is plain to me that each answer I give you can only open new questions in your mind. Perhaps I would do better to advise you to wait until your life among us will teach you these things,

since you have decided to stay with us. But I am going to relieve you of your chiefest doubts right now.

"You, my friend, and your countrymen, have never known the truth about the constitution of the human. We consist not of two elements, body and spirit, as you suppose, but of three: physical body, which we shall call clay; spiritual body, which we shall call ego; and soul, which we shall designate by no other name.

"You know a good deal about the clay body. Distinguish, henceforth, between ego and soul. The ego, though it is not the soul, is semi-spiritual. It is the thing that gives individuality to each of us. The clay shapes itself according to the ego, and acts only by direction of the ego—except for some automatic functions, like breathing. Without its ego the clay is a clot

of earth. The clay has no ability to feel. So with the other organs. They are merely instruments through which the ego feels, smells, hears, and so forth. Without these instruments, as a matter of fact, the ego can perform all these functions much better—which explains the excellence of your present sensual perceptions.

"The soul is a purely spiritual being. The soul is the source of our higher spiritual capacities. All living creatures of the lower orders possess egoes. The human alone possesses a soul, which is able to reside in him by attaching itself to the most spiritual part of the ego. The ego resides in the clay by attaching its most physical side to the blood of the human.

"During the daytime the soul is in a torpid state of passivity. The ego, the real person, can draw from the soul certain powers for any purpose he desires, good or ill. At night, when the human sleeps, the ego falls into a state of torpid passivity. That is why we are unconscious in our sleep.

"The achievement of our scientists has been this: we have learned to detach from the human body its soul together with the ego whilst the ego remains awake and in command. This is your present condition. Now you, your ego, the person to whom I am explaining this, can and must feel the same things as when you are in the clay. For it is the ego that owns all the senses and instincts, it is the ego that has the capacity to feel, hear, see, smell, taste, think, remember, believe, and so forth. Have I cleared the matter for you somewhat?"

"Sepsafem to Unatalcus: O, yes! Thank you. I am beginning to understand my condition, and it is indeed wondrous to learn these facts. But now this puzzles me: Why are we so ignorant, so lacking in intelligence, during our infancy and childhood? Isn't the ego, owning all these attributes, just as ripe spiritually when we are born as when we grow up?"

"Unatalcus to Sepsafem: No. The ego is originally a blank, and is imbued with the instincts common on Earth by its blood, which is constituted of Earth-materials. The real personality of the ego is acquired with the experiences of life, and he becomes more or less intelligent, and his character varies accordingly as he is influenced by the instincts of the blood and the dictations of the soul. So we begin life in purity of character but with lack of experience. The child has the pure instincts of the soul but no knowledge of Earthly life until it learns gradually and becomes, perhaps, highly intelligent."

“Sepsafem to Unatalcus: Then I would like to know what keeps the human body alive when the ego and soul have been taken out of it by your process.”

“Unatalcus to Sepsafem: There is a life-nerve in the heart which throbs automatically and sustains essential bodily functions in a mechanical way. Enough of

the ego’s power remains in the blood to continue those functions. And indeed a slight disturbance of the clay might cause the life-and brain-nerves to come in contact. This would set an electrical fluid in motion that fetches the ego, no matter from what distance, instantly back to his clay body. In our case the two nerves have been so disconnected that no accident will unite them. You are therefore free not to rejoin your clay until you choose.”

“Sepsafem to Unatalcus: Pardon my seeming in-satiety—I fear to weary you with my difficulties, yet am unable to resist pursuing this fascinating subject. May I know what specific purpose your science of disrobing the ego serves except to make possible conversation with a stranger—an event which must be the greatest rarity here?”

“Unatalcus to Sepsafem: A little reflection will soon convince you that an ego separated from the clay cannot lie to another ego in the same condition. We can thus, if necessary, obtain the confession of any deed. If one of our tribe should be accused of an act not above reproach he is merely subjected to the harmless test of the separation of ego and soul from the clay. If guilty, he would at once reveal the truth by directing his thoughts to us in reply to a simple question.”

“Sepsafem to Unatalcus: Most ingenious! In our less advanced countries we administer every solemn oath to our public officials yet we obtain only a modicum of honest government, and we often cannot place the guilt for the foulest malfeasance upon anyone. If we knew this secret we should be able to eradicate all betrayal—we should be able to establish a reign of universal justice!”

“Unatalcus to Sepsafem: Quite right. We apply our infallible test before anyone takes office to learn if

his intent is virtuous. At the end of the official’s term we test him again to see if he has served the community conscienscious ly. Dishonesty is

therefore unknown among us. But we have other uses for the science of disrobing ourselves from the clay. We can visit any place on earth without ourselves being seen there. For the crude fleshy eyes cannot see an ego. We can even visit places not on earth, being in this condition not subject to gravity, climate, and other atmospheric limitations, and this is of the utmost importance to us. Indeed we value our science most because it enables us to visit the land of Niames which is not on the planet Earth."

This last statement, it may be imagined, instantly piqued my curiosity to a new intensity. But my inquiries were cut short by our arrival at the floating island's control-house.

C3. It was a low structure, rectangular in shape, with many doors and windows. We paused in front of what must have been the main entrance when a young man, apparently yet in his early teens, approached and opened the wide door. He entered, shutting it almost in my face. He was, of course, not in our condition but in the normal physical state, and could not see us standing there. Following his example I put my hand against the door and pushed. Judge my vexation when I found that the young stripling seemed to have more power in his arm than I—a seasoned soldier.

Baffled, momentarily, I turned towards my mentor. His features were contracted in a smile of exquisite delight, in which I joined him at once, realizing my error.

"Unatalcus to Sepsafem: Ah-ha! my friend, you make a very ambitious ego. Opening doors, however, is not for such as we. And though we could penetrate

or open them if we chose, there is a better way. Up to the roof we go."

I followed him accordingly, discovering that my will was sufficient to impel me upward or in any direction. On the roof, surely enough, was a smaller structure, the doors of which stood wide open. Rapidly we descended, and I found myself soon in a large room filled with the oddest assortment of apparata. One of the walls was lined with some sixty levers and wheels of various colors. The other walls were overhung with curious maps and charts. In the center a huge globe was suspended, magnetically, I thought, in mid air. Upon it were outlined the waters and lands of Earth in white and black. A white sheet of crystal, overspreading part of one of the walls, showed plainly my uncle's ship. A number of the islanders, in their

natural state, so that they could not see us, were engaged in manipulating certain of the levers according to signals flashed to them, by what means and whence I could not understand, upon framed sheets of white on several tables. It was a busy scene. In one corner I recognized the lad who had preceded us in. He now sat upon a stool copying one of the large charts in miniature. In another comer was a railing within which a stairway led down to what was evidently the basement.

"Sepsafem to Unatalcus: What is below?"

"Unatalcus to Sepsafem: The machinery that propells us. Its workings are controlled from this room. You may go down to the very bowels of this island to see it, but you would understand even less than you do here because you are untutored in the science that deals with the physical power we have learned to employ."

Even as the islander addressed me thus I observed on the crystal sheet that the ship was gradually fading.

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Smaller and smaller it grew—indicating, I judged, that the island was moving away from it at a fast clip. Yet no effects of its motion were discernible—due, I doubted not, to its great size. The frigate, making its final bows to us into the bluish waves, soon vanished from sight, leaving in me a feeling of mixed sadness and relief.

"Sepsafem to Unatalcus: Some other time I shall be glad to see the machinery below. Right now I must report to you a condition that has been distracting me for quite a while. I am a little embarrassed to mention it, but I am exceedingly hungry, thirsty, and desirous of smoking!"

"Unatalcus to Sepsafem: How inconsiderate of me not to have thought of this before! Well, my friend, I shall invite you at once to my home and place before you a sumptuous repast, mature old wine, and the finest tobacco grown. Only tell me, into what stomach shall you drop the edibles?"

"Sepsafem to Unatalcus: I beg you, Sir, do not jest with me. I feel faint for want of refreshment." But even as I spoke the truth impressed itself upon me that I lacked the faculties with which to eat, drink and smoke. How I could satisfy a craving for what I had always regarded as essentials represented a serious embarrassment to me. The islander, however, observing my unhappiness, soon put me at ease on this score.

“Unatalcus to Sepsafem: Pardon me, if I have treated with undue levity a matter of seeming consequence. Be sure that you are merely imagining you want nourishment. You can do without it indefinitely. If anything is to be done for you, it must be to attend your clay frame. This our medical men will do shortly, for the proper hour is almost come. If you desire, you may return to the orchard to see them at their occupation.”

“Sepsafem to Unatalcus: I am relieved to learn that my craving for bodily necessities is purely imaginary. I shall strive to put it out of my mind. And I shall certainly be pleased to return to the orchard and see my body treated by your physicians.” But, bravely though I spoke, it was no easy matter to still the imagining of my appetites, and of this I shall have more to say later.

Leaving the control-house we took a new road, gliding over rather than walking upon it in a leisurely fashion. We passed many more beautiful homes of charming construction. Proceeding thus amidst surroundings more pleasant than any I recalled in Europe I was reminded of what my host had said about visiting places not on Earth. I had meant to question him about this when our arrival at the control-house terminated our conversation. I returned now to that subject, hoping my good friend would not be offended if I tried to put my hunger out of mind by giving vent to my inquisitiveness.

“Sepsafem to Unatalcus: Tell me, pray, something of this land of Niames you mentioned before. It may help me forget my inordinate cravings for refreshment. Where is it, and why do you regard your ability to visit it so highly?”

“Unatalcus to Sepsafem: You have chosen a most entertaining subject to aid you, I must say. Indeed, had you offered me a lesser reason for discussing Niames I should probably have put you off for the present. As it is I can only give you a fractional idea about that land. We prize our ability to visit it because there we can learn things undreamed by Earthly man. Our scientists have visited it often, bringing back each time invaluable knowledge. If the universe holds no mysteries to the inhabitants

of Nimikahara it is because of our excursions to Niames."

"Sepsafem to Unatalcus: It is good of you to initiate me into your secrets. I wonder if it would be taking too many liberties with your hospitality to inquire concerning the location of Niames in the solar system. At any rate, I am fascinated by the thought of mortal men actually leaving Earth to visit a land beyond the clouds. This was more than ever I dreamed to accomplish with my makeshift of an aeronautical device."

"Unatalcus to Sepsafem: Your miraculous arrival upon our island, and the fact that I have already told you much is reason enough why I should be free in informing you. Know, however, that there is not time enough to tell you all we know about Niames. Concerning its location, it is situated directly above Earth, and around it—continent over continent. It is composed of Isacsimol—a substance invisible to flesh eyes, which look right through it as through clear glass. Niames rests some thousands of miles above Earth's atmosphere. The various continents are divided by oceans of ether. Picture it thus: to the inhabitants of Niames our planet represents the bottom of their oceans. A human unencumbered by his clay body can reach Niames by traveling up through any of these oceans. But here we are at the orchard, just in time."

Verily we had arrived none to soon. My vision was attracted at once to my clay body, around which stood several young islanders, in the normal physical condition, listening attentively to an older man, whom I judged correctly to be a senior physician.

As I watched him he drew forth from a black box a curious instrument of glass, connected by a pipe to the inside of the box. One of the young students opened

my lips—rather the lips of my clay—into which the tip of the glass was inserted. The physician pressed a little lever. I could see a bluish gas or liquid pass through the instrument into the lips. The injector was withdrawn, and the young men rearranged the soft turf underneath the body. The physician concluded his operations by stamping something upon the palm of the right hand, which he shut fast. Even at a distance I could discern the characters imprinted, but they were unfamiliar to me. My puzzled glance was rewarded at once with an explanation.

"Unatalcus to Sepsafem: He has injected into your clay a sufficient quantity of nutritive and medicinal essences to preserve it against all causes

of deterioration and waste for seven days. The stamp upon the palm marks it for replenishment in 168 hours. Since you are solicitous of its welfare, leave it here. It could not be better attended than by our physicians."

CHAPTER THREE
THE ROAD TO NIAMES

How I desired the undesirable—Two questions and one answer—My choice—The test—A new attire and improved vision—The denizens of the air—The flight to Niames.

C1. Doubtless it will seem surprising to the reader, after what I have related concerning the advantages I enjoyed whilst free from my clay body, in improved perception through all my senses, that while the island scientist labored with my body I watched it with love- hungry eyes, feeling an almost uncontrollable urge to leap right into it. To my ownself, however, this attachment was no matter of surprise. It seemed so natural that nothing could have kept me from yielding to my strong desire to reunite with my physical counterpart except the one thing that saved me from what might have turned out to be a foolish step—the presence of Unatalcus, for whom I felt a profound respect; and, to be perfectly truthful, not a little fear. For despite their apparent good will it occurred to me that the Nimikaharans might not approve of a step which would put us worlds apart, and perhaps make me nothing but one of the race with whom association was to them objectionable. I must force myself to wait, thought I, until I am sure to make no false move.

I had the feeling, as I stood there gating with longing eyes upon my clay, of one possessing a frame complete with every limb and part. I felt as if I had legs, arms, head, shoulders, heart, lungs,—everything—but they seemed to be made of air. This extraordinary sensation enhanced my desire to unite with my physical body so as to give my organs such substance and reality as I was accustomed to. My airy state was one of extreme discomfort. Although I had not directed the flow of my thoughts toward his mind the kind islander understood my emotions, for he soon communicated to me:

"Unatalcus to Sepsafem: In so far as we are concerned you may even now reunite yourself with your Earthbody. We only separated your ego from the clay in order to learn certain facts concerning your arrival here. Since we already know these, and your desire to reenter the physical body has perhaps become violent, there is no reason why you should not do so.

The choice rests entirely with you. We would assist you to return to your people."

"Sepsafem to Unatalcus: You have accurately gauged my feelings, but I am not ready to act upon your kind offer. Since my arrival upon this floating island some wonderful secrets have been revealed to me. I have also seen doors that lead to the solution of others even more important and engaging. I should like to remain with you some while yet and proceed further upon the road of your advanced knowledge and science. For this reason I choose rather to suffer the privations of separation from my physical body for the present—provided it is agreeable to the masters of Nimikahara."

"Unatalcus to Sepsafem: You must not doubt our sincerity in inviting you to sojourn with us. We recognise in you a man of worth. Your willingness to suffer

in order that you may advance yourself in learning indicates your character. It places you highly in our estimation. You must consider yourself our guest, and claim every privilege of a native. You have only to express your wishes and we shall take pleasure in gratifying them."

"Sepsafem to Unatalcus: You have spoken like the kindest of friends, and I scarcely know how to be thankful enough. You are a marvelous people—the most hospitable and friendly among whom I have ever passed. I shall therefore impose upon your generosity further, but only to the extent of asking you two more questions: How long will this vexatious desire to reenter my physical body endure, and is there any likelihood of my visiting the land of Niames? What you have told me about it has excited in me a craving, greater than the desire to reunite with my body, to behold Niames, even if only for a brief while."

"Unatalcus to Sepsafem: Honored guest, you have asked two distinct questions but the answer to the second is related to and depends upon that of the first. I have already told you that your desire for bodily things is mere imagination. It is force of habit rather than any real need your ego feels for them. You will want food and drink when you remind yourself of these things; and you would strive to evade the thrust of a sword coming upon you, although in truth a material weapon can no more harm you than you can consume material fuel. Now you are by way of suffering thus for a goodly time. As long as you allow your clay body to slumber whilst you

remain outside of it, the desire to reenter it must abide with you. Naturally your resistance of this urge will be a source of suffering to you for which there is no true necessity since you can restore yourself to normal

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physical life just as soon as you desire. On the other hand, we know of a process by which we emancipate ourselves from the cravings for and of the clay—a process established by our learned egoölogists. This means, however, even greater suffering for several days—such a suffering as only the strongest-willed and most courageous can endure. But those who endure the entire process are thereafter freed, as I have said, from the inconvenience of the desires connected with the clay. And now I may answer your question regarding Niames.

"Should you choose to avoid all the sufferings of your present condition and reenter your body, you must resign all hope of seeing Niames. But if you desire greatly to make this visit, you must resolve to suffer the process of which I have spoken—for until your longing for the clay and its life is abolished we cannot let you accompany us to Niames—nor indeed would you be admitted. There is involved also a matter of improved vision of which you are not yet aware. Those who undergo the process are privileged to pass through another—wholly pleasant—that gives them a gift without which much that they behold would remain partly obscure. My advice is, if you wish to visit Niames in company with the next group going there from Nimikahara, that you enter at once upon the process so that you will be ready to join them when they leave. Now you may make your choice. Avoid further suffering by asking to be restored to your body, or choose the difficult process in preparation for the visit to Niames."

"Sepsafem to Unatalcus: I choose the process and Niames. I would endure anything to visit the land beyond the clouds. Pray do for me whatever you can in this matter so that I may not be prevented from accompanying you to that mysterious land."

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"Unatalcus to Sepsafem: Have your own pleasure, friend, you are governed solely by your own will. But I warn you, this process is the severest test of man s will-power that has ever been devised. Many of our people fail several times before they succeed."

Seeing that I was not discouraged, Unatalcus signaled to someone concerning the disposal of my clay. Meanwhile I reflected on the wonder of it that our egoes, unburdened of the clay, can direct their thoughts to any individual mind they choose, far or near, or keep them private by not directing them.

Four Nimikaharans carrying what resembled a portable bed soon made their appearance. Gently they placed my insensate clay upon the cot and bore it off into a house of several stories not far away. Observing its removal I gazed at my clay with a longing that I strove in vain to suppress. By force I removed my gaze from it, addressing my friend.

"Sepsafem to Unatalcus: Will you not tell me, patient friend, what are these myriads of objects in the air all about us? Some seem to resemble the egoes of creatures familiar to me. Others are totally strange. What are they and what are they doing?"

"Unatalcus to Sepsafem: I could tell you what they all are, but it is unnecessary. When you have passed through the second process I have mentioned, your vision will be so improved that you will be able to recognize them all. For the present know that these objects are the egoes of thoughts, deeds, words, and phrases of human beings. Each can be indentified as to its origin, and each exists for a definite purpose. But it is needless to go far into this subject now. Come and let me introduce you to the process by which you are to be freed from your clayen longings"

Unatalcus escorted me then to a pleasant grove in a secluded part of the island, situated right upon the shore. He gave me a few brief instructions, telling me I must remain at this place until all desires connected with my clay were vanquished. Before departing he promised to communicate with me once every day to learn how I was progressing. I appreciated this especially because it meant that he would have each day to divest himself of his clay to which he was returning as soon as he left me.

C2. It was a simple enough process but, as I was soon to learn, frightfully painful and difficult to endure. I was, by constant autosuggestion, to alienate my will from all bodily desires. To test the extent of my accomplishment I was to be presented with numerous opportunities to gratify my desires, arranged in this grove by the scientists of Nimikahara. But in the event of a very strong attack upon my power of resistance there

was one last recourse—I could leap into the icy waters of the ocean where temporary respite was always to be found.

No sooner had my instructor left me than what had seemed quite feasible when described in words became in practice the most difficult of all things to accomplish. I found that my stay in the grove by the ocean was not likely to grow irksome by reason of its solitude. I was to have no lack of company—most unwelcome company, my fellow-sojourners of the grove being the bearers of all the bodily pleasures and passions that ever I had known or heard of. Not content with exciting my appetites by their presence they stretched out arms of attraction and temptation at times when I was least able to resist them. Plainly they were actuated by an intelligence that understood

how to combat my will. There was not a thing I had ever liked which was not brought to me, and in such a way that it was near impossible to decline them. Thus, when the craving of my hunger rose to its highest pitch a number of beautiful girls would suddenly appear bearing trays laden with all the most delicious and appetizing viands known to human cookery, golden and silver trays laden with spicy roasts, breads and cakes emitting the most attractive baker's smells, and flagons of sparkling wine. At other times one of my lovely but unwelcome attendants would make her appearance with a handsomely carved pipe filled with a tobacco that I, a connoisseur in such matters, recognised as being of the finest quality and aroma. This, placed right before me, was to me nearly irresistible. I do not propose to render a tiresome and lengthy account of my battle with these concentrations of allurement day after day. Suffice it to say that many a time I had recourse to a hasty plunge into the blessed waters without which I could never have survived the test even one day. But this recourse was a very painful one, the cold water being to my airy state like fire to the physical body.

The worst of all the enticements I had to resist was that of a young woman who appeared on the first day. She was undoubtedly the most beautiful female I had ever beheld. All the arts and wiles of feminine seductiveness were at her command. Nor did she hesitate to approach me when I seemed to waver in my resolution, and attempt to embrace me. At such moments it required all the power of will I could summon to evade her advances and leap desperately into the ocean. I would have given up in no

long time if not for two things. First, the determination to make a very good impression upon Unatalcus. Second, the suspicion, which I kept reiterating

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to myself, that these things were unreal and would vanish if I yielded so far to attempt seizing any of them.

A week passed whilst I endured the tortures of this severe test. Several times my fear and exhaustion reached a state so extreme that I lost consciousness for a while, awaking only to face again the same situation. I noticed however, that after the first few days a number of creatures with whom I fought the battle of the will disappeared after I was able to ignore their attentions; and others became weaker and slower in their movements so that they did not attract me as much as formerly. By the end of the fifth day, after a particularly exhausting experience, I began to believe I should be victorious in my battle.

How odd it seemed to me, the last time I saw each subject, as well as the female whose allurements had previously driven me to despair! The former appeared rotten and of bad odor, while the beautiful young woman was now ugly and decrepit! I could let her sit before me without any desire to touch her.

At this time I began to understand the true significance, of the process to which I had submitted. I had had to teach myself, in a very practical manner, the fact that much of what we regard as vital necessities is in fact of little or no importance to the ego—the real human personality. Throughout this process I had been gradually freeing myself from enslavement to my clay body and its own superfluous wants. I understood that henceforth my ego, being separated from my clay, should have no craving for Earthly allurements—indeed, no interest in them whatsoever. This state of mind I had attained. And I was happy indeed to enjoy this degree of freedom from things superfluous which had seemed so vital before.

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C3. At the conclusion of the seventh day I felt a queer stiffening of my limbs. It seemed as if the substance of which I was composed had been compressed. This occurred when the last of my companions of the grove had departed and seemed gone to return no more—as it proved to be. Left alone at last, I enjoyed a peace of mind that was in vast contrast with the

dread and vexation of the last week. I waited to receive my daily message from Unatalcus but suddenly was overjoyed to see him approaching in person.

"Unatalcus to Sepsafem: Hail! mighty one, you have survived the severities of an unusual process. Prepare now for your reward. Come with me."

Thanking him for the compliment which, however, I thought I had well earned, I accompanied him to one of a number of round stone structures that abounded in the center of the Isle. A few steps within led down to a small compartment into which I was told to descend. I felt that I was entering into the midst of a current of warm air that seemed to embrace me completely. Powerful rays of light shone upon me from all sides. When I emerged from the compartment I perceived that a great change had come over me with this treatment.

"Unatalcus to Sepsafem: You are now truly as one of us. You have received the attire of which I spoke and should be able to see much that escaped you before."

This truth I had already perceived. I felt new life in me—and, more than anything else, a wondrous improvement in vision. I could see clearly all that abounded in the atmosphere. The objects in the air that previously had mystified me were now full of meaning. I recognized among them the replicas of live creatures as well as those of words, deeds, and thoughts! The color

of the light, however, was still unsatisfactory. It was a goodly measure brighter than any daylight to which I had previously been accustomed, but yet too dim for the new perceptibility of my vision. I had still the impression of being at the bottom of an ocean and looking up through waters filled with myriads of creatures and objects darting forth and back, up and down, hither and thither like a myriad particles of dust dancing in the lone ray of sunlight penetrating a darkened room. There were countless varieties of creatures, and countless numbers of each variety. Some were attractive and beautiful, some like fantastic and fanciful butterflies. Others were ugly of shape and repulsive of hue.

As the islander had prophesied, I no longer required explanations concerning these beings; I was able to understand the character and intent of each merely by applying my mind to its presence. Just what the meaning

of this new power was I could not tell. It seemed as if I had known about these creatures in some long forgotten past, and many of them seemed especially familiar. Reflecting briefly I realized that I was in fact standing on the bottom of a vast ocean that, like the watery seas with which I had always been familiar, was filled with life and animation. There was but this difference: the nitroxic ocean about and above us is filled with almost immaterial creatures representing the egoes not only of all the living beings of land, water, and air but even of the deeds performed by them, of the sounds they utter and the thoughts they entertain!

The nature of any individual ego to which my attention strayed no longer held forth any mystery to me. In the more beautiful objects that floated by me, in some of the most charming birds and butterflies, I recognized the egoes of admirable deeds, divine thoughts, noble

phrases. In creatures of horrible appearance I beheld the egoes of actions, words, and reflections of ignoble and baneful character. My attention was riveted for a moment upon a bird of rare sightliness that flew rapidly past me. It was, I perceived instantly, the ego of a splendid phrase, uttered many years ago in a strange language—a phrase that expressed a protest against a system of oppression practiced against the lower classes of the land. But it was pursued by another bird, a frightful, black monstrosity that had hooked a sharp talon in one of the outstretched wings of its beautiful prey. This vengeful bird I recognized as the ego of a thought of the same man, entertained even as he ejaculated that fine phrase of protest—a thought that betrayed his hypocrisy: the thought of what he personally could gain from the overthrow of the present ruling class.

It became clear to me that every human word, thought, and deed gives birth to a replica. To describe my wonderment at this discovery—or my delight in the new power I had acquired in thus indentifying the nature of the inhabitants of the nitroxic ocean—would be impossible except in that wordless and soundless language through which I cannot now communicate.

“Sepsafem to Unatalcus: It is marvelous. I am overjoyed! If my sufferings of the last week were the price of but this gift it was well worth it. To think that there exists in the atmosphere a record of every word, deed,

and thought of every human! That our fleetingest thought, which we scarcely notice as it passes through the mind, makes a permanent impression upon the atmosphere! But tell me, what causes the astoundingly rapid movement of the word-egoes constantly hurtling through the air in all directions?"

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"Unatalcus to Sepsafem: The explanation is simple. The mind of the human is a magnetic instrument, attracting toward itself the words needed to express its thoughts in speech. When a human speaks, his mind is at work attracting a supply of words from the stock in the air. They are summoned by his mind and discharged by the tongue. Some people do this better than others, depending upon the condition of the magnetic power in their minds. That is why you find in people various degrees of eloquence. Some are endowed with more effective, discriminating, word magnets, others with poorer instruments. There are millions of people speaking all the time. Is it any wonder that billions of words are continually on the move at the call of millions of minds?"

"Sepsafem to Unatalcus: No wonder at all, and this matter is quite clear to me now. But what happens to these egoes of the thought, speech and activity of human beings?"

"Unatalcus to Sepsafem: They are disposed of by arrangements in Niames. Concerning these arrangements you shall have ample opportunity to inform yourself in Niames."

"Sepsafem to Unatalcus: Ah! you make me more than ever impatient to behold that wonderful land—even if it must seem rude in me to be thus anxious to leave your pleasant island after the great kindness with which I have been received here. But I have no thought other than to return and study at length your mode of life. For the present, however, there is nothing I desire more than to know when the next expedition departs for Niames."

"Unatalcus to Sepsafem: Do not be apologetic for your natural inclinations. If you knew half the truth about Niames you would be even more anxious to visit

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it. And you shall do so sooner than you expect. An expedition to Niames was to leave this morning but I arranged to delay it until tomorrow at sunrise so that you might join it."

“Sepsafem to Unatalcus: How thoughtful and considerate of you, my friend—I shall never be able to repay your numerous kindnesses. Dawn can hardly come too soon for me. In the meantime how shall I occupy the night?”

“Unatalcus to Sepsafem: A very important problem, but I think I shall find a way to make it interesting for you. How would you like to join one of our classes in astronomy? We are in a most favorable latitude for observations tonight—and you know the quality and scope of our instruments.”

“Sepsafem to Unatalcus: I would be delighted.”

And thus I spent one of the most interesting evenings of my fife in the observance of myriads of stars at distances that challenged the imagination to conceive them. The Nimikaharan professors, true to their character, were inexhaustible in the patience with which they answered every student’s questions. I found that this group of students were the very islanders who, on the morrow, would accompany me to Niames. In preparation, they had all been declayed, hence I was able to understand all that passed amongst them. Before I was aware of it, it had dawned for us, and promptly with its earliest signs came my guardian friend.

After a most pleasant greeting and inquiries concerning how I had enjoyed the past few hours he led the entire group that was going to Niames to a field nearby. There was nearly fifty of the Nimikaharans who had waited for the appearance of the sun’s first rays. Suddenly the leader of the expedition issued a command

for us to be ready. Quickly I bade farewell to Unatalcus, whose company I knew I would miss, for he was not going with us. From a blue box that reposed on the ground near us there was suddenly released a vibrant current to which those going to Niames—and I among them, as I had been instructed—hastily attached themselves by that part of the ego which, in the clay, is called the appendix. The last thing I noticed was one of the islanders manipulating a lever on the blue box which apparently controlled the direction of the current that was bearing us away. In an instant I was up above the clouds and mounting with the speed of lightning toward the distant land of Niames together with more than two score companions. But among them there was none happier than I.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE PORT OF NIAMES

We arrive in Niames—The light—The ceremony of the Port—I obtain a guide, and a flighter—The scenery—The tour begins.

C1. If ever you have shot up to the surface after a plunge into a great depth of water and, inhaling your first breath, laid yourself back upon the water to rest, then you can picture to yourself our trip to and arrival at Niames. While flying upward it was almost impossible for the passengers of the current that transported us to see or feel anything; and indeed we kept our eyes shut throughout the journey. Arrived at our destination, I followed my companions in releasing the current. We remained floating on our backs upon the surface of the nitroxic ocean out of whose depths we had just come. We opened our eyes then, and I obtained my first glimpse of the world above our atmosphere. To make my surprise intelligible to the reader I must use a terrestrial figure of speech. The sight took my breath away—even more so than the unaccustomed speed of the trip.

It would be vain to attempt to compare the brilliance of the light above what I have termed the nitroxic ocean with anything known on Earth. To describe it is

wholly beyond the scope of verbal language. In its translucent brightness I could see many distant planets in their real colors, like so many great round disks of the full moon at rising. Aside from its wondrous brilliance, the light had a distinct shade of sparkling color, something like the deep intense beauty of a pure blue-white diamond, without equivalent in beauty on earth. It would be no more possible to describe it than for one to depict to a person born blind the dazzling and colorful displays of fireworks set off on some grand public occasion. I realized then that the light we know on Earth after it has pierced through the ocean of air comes to us broken and denuded of all its primal beauty—just as it suffers still more loss of its purity after it has passed through a depth of water.

Speechless with astonishment at finding myself bathed in the sparkling flood of this wondrous light I reclined for some time on the surface of the nitroxic ocean like one floating gently in a quiet lake. Although I had

recently rather accustomed myself to new environments and astonishing discoveries the marvel of the light in Niames aroused in me new stages of amazement mixed with highest admiration.

Suddenly I noticed that my traveling companions of Nimikahara had stepped upon the shore and were making ready to enter the gateway of a magnificent castle, brightly green in color and topped with tall towers of artistically wrought golden lattice work. Obeying their signals I entered the wide open gateway.

We found ourselves in the presence of a group of officers whose appearance was a new source of wonderment to me. Their forms were quite like our own but composed of what seemed to be transparent silver. Each of them wore a girdle of silken blue around the waist,

in the form of a broad sash whose tassels of many colors fell the length of a foot upon the loins. We passed singly in a line between two rows of these officers, each one of whom separately greeted the visitors from Nimikahara with many charming speeches of welcome. Having delayed somewhat to start for the castle I was in consequence last on the line. I acknowledged these greetings exactly in the manner of my companions, which consisted of stating the name by which I was known, my appreciation of the welcome I was accorded, and the purpose of my coming. It was a most charming procedure. The silvery officials, the Nimikaharans, and I too, spoke freely in the beautiful rhythmic style of the language of thought. But although I beheld my companions filled with confidence and the officials wreathed in smiling friendliness I could not shake off at once a feeling of trepidation. This was all so strange, so fantastic, so unbelievable, that I could not readily make myself feel at home, though this was just what the officials of the port seemed to be trying to do for me.

At the conclusion of the ceremonial exchanges of greeting one of the officials approached and engaged me in conversation.

“Napradsaca to Sepsafem: A newcomer, aren’t you?”

“Sepsafem to Napradsaca: O, yes, indeed. My first visit to your beautiful land.”

“Napradsaca to Sepsafem: Then I welcome you to the land of Niames, and assure you there is no cause for apprehension on your part. The land of

Niames is open to those who have found the road to it. We neither detain nor deport you. Niames is open before you."

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"Sepsafem to Napradsaca: I thank you most gratefully. But whither have my companions gone? I am afraid I shall be lost without them and not know where to go or what to do first—"

"Napradsaca to Sepsafem: Pray be not anxious, the first officer you meet shall be happy to perform any service you would require. Your companions, however, have not left you inconsiderately. They knew you would be well provided for. Now may I offer a suggestion?"

"Sepsafem to Napradsaca: Nothing would please me better than to follow your advice."

"Napradsaca to Sepsafem: Then avail yourself of a privilege accorded to every first visitor in Niames—that of a guide to show you about and lead you to the numerous places of interest. You may retain the guide just as long as you find his services of value."

"Sepsafem to Napradsaca: I cannot marvel sufficiently at the extent of your hospitality and certainly shall take advantage of your kind offer to supply me with a guide. But it would greatly oblige me if you would select my guide for me."

"Napradsaca to Sepsafem: Gladly—take friend Attarokib—" and he signaled to one of a group that was stationed in an alcove nearby. "You should find him an entertaining companion, and a very helpful one. He is a most experienced guide."

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: I shall have the pleasure." With these words the guide approached us, making a dignified bow of greeting. Napradsaca excused himself then, leaving me in charge of my guide. By way of opening a conversation I remarked,

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: You have a most charming way of treating strangers here. Are you often occupied as a guide?"

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"Attarokib to Sepsafem: No, I am engaged rarely. But I am most happy to wait my turn to be of service. As for our conduct with visitors, it is but natural. How else could we conduct ourselves with the guests of our land than to receive them gladly and offer them all that they might expect?"

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: I believe you are right, but this is not to my knowledge the universal custom. And now, my friend, whither shall we go first?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: We are at present still in the port of Niames where our guests from all the stars arrive. Before we go anywhere it is best that I provide you with a small automatic flighter. It will enable you to fly from place to place in our extensive domains with the same speed and facility as I do. If you will wait a moment I shall fetch it for you.”

He was gone in an instant, like a ghost. And a moment later he had returned with the promised flighter—which turned out to be such a tasseled blue girdle as he and all the officials of the port wore. He helped me to adjust it about my waist, attaching a gold colored cord on its inside to my appendix. I felt much curiosity to know how it would feel to go about like a bird. To my surprise the flighter did not cause me to feel any difference in myself. It was just as if I had donned an ornamental silken sash. But I had only to place my hand upon it and it answered automatically to my wishes, raising me up and forward in any direction I willed, and at any speed I chose. Soon it seemed as if I had never known any other form of locomotion. At the behest of my guide I followed him out through a gate similar to the one through which I had entered the castle of the port. At last the land of Niames itself was before my eyes.

C2. Is this Niames? I thought to myself in fresh amazement. I should not have believed such splendor and beauty possible!

Stretched out before me over numberless miles was a vision of the most enchanting scenic grandeur, so glorious, so magnificent, so beautiful, that I was brought to a stiff pause by unspeakable admiration. Millions of structures were all about me, of architectural designs undreamed by man, of materials that resembled sapphires and fiery rubies and glistening diamonds arranged in entrancing imagery. Gardens were laid out with flowers, trees and shrubs of every color of the universe—many of color and shape unknown on Earth—and they yielded up a harmony of fragrance inconceivable to the inclayed senses. Rivers and streams of many colors wound their way over the land, their aerial substance redolent of exquisite perfumery that rivaled the attar and the myrrh and the other intoxicating aromas of the gardens, most of them aromas that I did not recognize. On many of the rivers I saw yachts of various proportions, fancifully

ornamented, sailing serenely with their Niamesian passengers. The shores rose steeply from the rivers, ending in tall hills topped by villas of inviting beauty, multi-colored, oddly designed, surpassing imagination. As far as my sight extended I beheld tremendous public buildings, some spreading their eaves over dozens of miles, constructed of the most beautiful substances and along architectural lines that eclipsed the finest of the famed edifices of Earth. Temples built of pure gems in colors of inspiring beauty reared high their towers of sparkling hues and spread their broad balconies over an extent no less than the domains of some of our European kingdoms.

Transferring my gaze upward I beheld groups of people traveling by means of luminous rays from planet

to planet, their gay manners indicating that they were bent upon pleasurable excursions. At various positions in the atmosphere were stationed musical orchestras that played alternately, supplying music, instrumental and vocal, sweeter, lovelier, more divine than any I ever had heard. Everything about me was unsurpassably rich in color and tone, yet insuperably delightful to the eye and ear; and softness and tranquility were the dominant characteristics. The soulful music that made the heart to feel the harmony of the universe was indeed felt by the ear which was directed to receive it, but it created no sound in the atmosphere to conflict with other sounds and annoy those who were disinclined to listen. The colorful scenery that dazzled the eye did so only in the sense of delighting it; far from being harsh, its effect was tender and soothing.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: What shall I examine first? Where shall I first go? It is all so enchanting that I am as one paralysed with joy. I could remain here seemingly forever in the pleasure of gating at the scenery of Niames."

My guide had been enjoying the sight of my rapt attention. He now replied,

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: You will find many surprises yet in store for you. But as for what we may do now, I think we would best go to Aimedrat to begin with. It is one of the very interesting lands of Niames. It is almost evening now. If we start at once we can travel at leisure, and be there long

enough for you to see a good deal of the life of the land before morning. Then we can spend the day in the crystal park. And afterwards—there will be no lack of places to visit."

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"Sepsafem to Attarokib: I submit myself unreservedly to your guidance, my friend. You may lead me where you will."

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Then let us be on our way."

My guide and I gripped our girdles and soon we were soaring through the air like two birds on the wing. In less than half an hour, during which, however, we must have sped over several thousand miles, we descended right upon one of the busy streets in a large city of Aimedrat.

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CHAPTER FIVE
THE LAND OF UPS AND DOWNS

My guide and I on the streets of Aimedrat—We examine some queer houses—A rough encounter with two of the inhabitants—Their strange arrival—Their comical clothes—We visit a castle in the air—Why I was invisible—We go to the mines and markets, and are highly amused—The disappearance of an Aimedratian sweetheart—An incident at a remarkable college—The professor vanishes—The why of it all—The end of a delightful visit.

C1. A land of the queer and the comical I found Aimedrat, a land different even from all the other countries in Niames in many respects. A few of these differences, which I recognized at once, it is worth setting down immediately. First of all, the ground of the land was as black as night; secondly, the light of the land was a plain pure whiteness, neither as brilliant nor as beautiful as the common lumination of Niames; thirdly, the whole vast land—about the size of the Earth—was divided into cities, larger and smaller, there being no fields, no rivers, no fauna and no flora; fourthly, the houses were all of one kind, and a very peculiar kind at that, set up one next to the other in perfectly even streets; finally, the inhabitants, a people worth knowing for many reasons, had an astonishing way of arriving in and leaving their land.

Having hovered over the land for a brief while, my guide and I descended and, as I have said, took up our position on a street corner to see what adventure would befall us. We had not long to wait before things began happening. I stood there examining one of the houses—since house I must call it—and marveling at its strange appearance; for it consisted of nothing but a thin, flat, glasslike slab that served for a roof, and hung unsupported in the air! There were no walls—and of course no doors or windows; just the flat roof, which gave no privacy even from above because one could look right through it. I knew it was a house of the land because of the furnishings beneath the roof and because all the other houses on the streets around were exactly like this one.

If there was little of the house itself, there was not much in it either. The furnishings consisted of a round table, without legs, hanging unsupported in

the air like the roof; and a number of chairs set around it—the chairs also being plain slabs hanging in the air about a foot lower than the table! Not another thing in the house on the corner, in front of which I had stopped; not another article of furniture in any of the houses in the neighborhood.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: What an odd place! Who are the people that live here?"

Before my guide could reply I was suddenly struck in the shoulders from behind—or perhaps pushed violently—so that I fell right against Attarokib. Turning quickly to see whether I had been attacked or if this was only an example of the manners of the inhabitants of the land—in which case I would not have a very high opinion about them—I saw a tall man, completely naked, backing away from me toward the house, and staring at me as if his eyes would burst out of their sockets. I

was not sure whether he was more astonished or afraid. Finally he turned and ran into his house—the one right in front of us—and slumped into one of the seats, staring in front of him as if he had suddenly come upon a great mystery.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Well! what do you think of that? Not a word of apology out of him! Such unheard of rudeness!"

But my guide was laughing, laughing hilariously as if some vast merriment were afoot. His enjoyment was rudely interrupted. Right between us, as if out of nowhere, a person suddenly and violently made his appearance, parting us with a push of his shoulders. The newcomer, naked like his predecessor, did not stop at once in his course. He seemed to jump up slowly—and I noticed that there was a dim light shining in his brow—and then descended again to the ground, on the spot where we had made room for him. As he touched the surface, the light on his brow suddenly went out and his eyes, which had been shut, opened up slowly. The man, ignoring our presence, not seeming to know or care that he had a moment ago struck us a hard blow with his shoulders, stretched his arms out with a lazy motion—and in doing so would have hit me upon the nose if I had not quickly stepped aside—and opened up his mouth in a prodigious yawn.

Only a hasty signal from my guide stopped me from approaching the ill-mannered fellow with a view to having a word with him. The latter, continuing to act as if Attarokib and I were not in existence, proceeded then

into the house on the corner and the following conversation ensued between him and the other, the newest arrival speaking first.

"Good waking, father. Is no one here yet?"

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"Good waking to you, son. Mother and sister are sleeping below yet."

"Isn't it surprising how sister is waking up later and later recently? She used to be the first up—now she is last."

"Yes, and there's no accounting for it, of course. However, surprises are multiplying lately. I had one today that I can't understand."

"Why, what has happened?"

"I hardly know. It was just as I awoke. I felt that my hand struck against something or someone in the street, but I looked and looked and couldn't see a thing. It was right there on the corner."

"There's certainly nothing there, father. If I were you I'd report it to the learned professors."

"I will do so this very day. Now there comes mother."

Instead of giving thought to the wonder that the two had apparently failed to see us, I looked where the speaker pointed, and was just in time to see the coming of the mother. She was rising up out of the very ground, rather floating up like a ghost from the grave. with a faint light glowing in her brow. She continued until she was a yard up in the air, then floated down, no more dressed than the other members of her family, until she touched the ground. The light in her brow was instantly extinguished, her eyes opened, and she yawned and stretched as her son had done a little while ago. After a moment she joined her family in their house, taking a chair beside her husband who immediately began to retell his mysterious adventure.

Now all around me the streets began to fill with people. They arrived in the strange manner I have described, coming up suddenly right out of the ground, rising

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up in the air with a dim light in their brows, which vanished as soon as they awoke upon touching the ground again with their feet. I made sure to keep out of the way of the arrivals, lest they strike against me, and I soon learned that I could avoid them easily by keeping my eyes on the ground. For, having grown accustomed to the light of the land, I was able to see a good

deal that had escaped me before; and the first benefit of my improved vision was a glimpse beneath the ground, so that I could see how the inhabitants of Aimedrat came up.

Underneath the ground I saw a large number of white threads, resembling currents of light, flying about in great space, up to within a yard of the surface of Aimedrat—which was no more than an inch thick—and down a vast distance out of sight. Some of these currents, as they came up, had attached to them people whom I recognized for Aimedratians by the light that was in their foreheads. The latter were held fast to the currents, flying swifter than lightning, by their appendices. As soon as a current bearing a person came within a yard of the surface its burden was automatically discharged. The Aimedratian then floated up, right through the ground of the land and past it, then came down and opened his eyes as the light in his brow vanished, and proceeded to act like one just awakened from a deep sleep. In this manner they all arrived, men and women, boys and girls, old and young, all completely naked.

I need hardly to say that the Aimedratians, like all people in every part of Niames, were in the translucent ego form. They were much darker than myself, however, though yet of a medium grayish shade, with some of their parts opaque. As I watched them coming up,

from beneath the ground and hastening as soon as they were well awake into their houses, for they all came up right in front of their own homes, I observed that their forms were not all opaque in the same place. Some had heads opaque, or only parts of the head, such as the eyes, ears, lips, or nose; some had hands, feet, fingers, heart, or stomach opaque; some had a number of their parts opaque. A few were nearly completely opaque—with hardly a translucent spot on their anatomy. There was none completely translucent, although a few were nearly so, the latter mostly having a few opaque spots in the head.

Turning my attention once more to the family whose arrival had been the first to come to my attention, I saw that father, mother, and son were now seated around the legless table eating hungrily with their hands out of three round dishes. Snatches of their conversation came to me, together with other snatches from the houses around in which a similar scene was taking place. But I paid no attention to their talk, for a new phenomenon of this curious land had come to my attention. Father, mother, and son now

were dressed, and I had no notion where their clothing had come from, or when they had donned it. Even as I looked about me I saw many more of the Aimedratians suddenly garbed before my eyes in some mysterious manner. But even more surprising was the character of their clothing—surprising and also quite comical.

It turned out that I had been deceived by a trick of the atmosphere. The Aimedratians came up already dressed in their garments but the atmosphere had made them seem naked. After a while their clothing was as if photographically developed upon them so that I could see it clearly. It was of course not material clothing, but

made up of the substance of shadows. It was, however, quite visible to me and also to the Aimedratians. This much I found amazing. Now came the amusing part of it. A very few had really fine attire on them so that they appeared respectable and even rich. The majority were garbed in tattered, shabby looking, ill-fitting raiment. Most comical to behold, some wore clothing very nice of make but several sizes too large for them, and some equally nice but several sizes too small; or, yet more comical, a mixture of overly large and undersized garments.

I could not repress a broad smile, and indeed I almost burst into hilarious laughter, to see them so absurdly, attired. They were mostly women who had the oversized garments, consisting of shoes, dresses, gloves and hats; and they made a sight that brought wry smiles to the face of even my guide, who had seen all this before. The men, on the other hand, had the most undersized clothing; and one can scarcely imagine how ludicrous a husky six footed man looks in size 32 trousers, or a little woman in size twelve shoes. They made a motley crowd after their apparel had become clearly distinguishable upon them, ranging in character from prince to beggar, from noble to chimney-sweep, from queen to cinder-wench. And there were scarcely two alike.

Just then the missing member of the family in the house nearest me arrived. I saw, as she came up out of the ground, that she was a beautiful woman. She seemed very sleepy indeed as she stood stretching and yawning in the street; and fortunately she was no more able to see me than the other Aimedratians had been, as I thought at the moment, or she might have been embarrassed by her lack of raiment. In this I was mistaken, for she was fully clothed at the time; but it must be a few

minutes before her apparel would become visible in the deceptive atmosphere of the land.

At last she entered her home and, exchanging greetings with her parents and brother, proceeded at once to an area behind the house. There she stooped and lifted up a round dish which she brought at once to the table. Sitting down before it, she carefully placed all her fingers upon ten deep grooves in the cover. And then I saw the dish open up slowly. The girl looked into it with an air of disappointment.

"There's so little today!" she exclaimed plaintively, even as she dug into the caked contents with her fingers.

"Yes, and look at your dress, my dear! It's even larger than it was yesterday!" This was the mother's remark, for just then the girl's clothing became visible.

"Can I do anything about it?" she replied; and receiving no answer to this simple question, continued: "Well, look across the street. That man's hat has been growing so small that he must hold it fast with his hand or it will fall off!"

"I have noticed for some time," the father remarked, "that our neighbor is slowly going mad. His trousers too are shrinking constantly, and his shoes. But it grieves me to think that lately you, too, daughter, seem to be threatened with madness. Your clothing is growing more and more ill-fitting."

"Can I do anything about it?" This was the girl's only reply, to which there seemed to be no answer.

"The learned professors have a new theory concerning our clothing," said the son, in a hopeful way. "I am going to learn about it at the academy later."

"Since I was a young woman," the mother interposed, "the learned professors have propounded four or five new theories each year. But thus far they have done

nothing to clear up the mystery of our sleeping, or our clothing. I am beginning to have my doubts."

"Hush! Mother dear!" replied the son. "They are very wise. Why, they have almost got a complete under standing of the seventh dimension. I am

to learn it as soon as I have passed my examination in the sixth dimension —which I expect will be much easier than the fifth was."

"Well, in my time we were satisfied with knowing five dimensions," the mother retorted, "and I think that enough. I would much rather they found out concerning certain happenings. There is our poor neighbor from the ninety-fourth street. Have you heard what's happened to her? I learned about it only yesterday just before I fell asleep. Her husband woke up with a very fine suit of clothes, rose up and right into a palace, and prompt took the children up with him; and the poor woman left all alone! And the professors don't know the why of it!"

"Now, now!" her husband exclaimed. "You know her husband's apparel has been growing nicer every day for a long time while hers has not improved. And why should he not take the children with him to a better home?"

"Are we going to sit here all day talking?" said the daughter impatiently. "We'll never get a bit of work done. I say let's be off for Amlehedara."

"I know why she's so anxious to get to Amlehedara," her brother remarked. "I've seen a certain young man about the last few days—"

"Courting and marriage, my son," the father admonished him, "is no subject for mocking. When you will have reached your sister's years you will under stand it better, no doubt."

With these words the head of the family led the way out, and the four joined a vast throng in the streets that was moving all in one direction—towards the center of the city. But I had no mind at the moment to follow them. I had seen another of the strange phenomena of the land and was bent upon discovering more about it.

C2. Among the thousands of Aimedratians who came up from beneath the surface were many quite translucent in their forms. These, instead of entering the houses before which they awoke, elevated themselves slowly into the air and rose up to a considerable height. As they rose I saw their clothing develop upon them—and it was handsome and well-fitting. Focusing my sight more closely upon these strange actions I learned the cause of them. Up above the common habitations were a large number of wondrous palaces, beautiful architecturally and great in size. Some of them were quite bizarre in design, all most attractive and sumptuous. They were

all so charming, and different from one another, that I did not know which way to look first. It occurred to me suddenly that these mansions had not been there before but appeared even as I looked, even as the richly clad Aimedratians rose up to meet them.

Sensing a new mystery, I elevated myself after the manner of the privileged Aimedratians and hovered around their palaces. The first thing I observed was that each mansion was surrounded by broad galleries on which stood many of the dishes now familiar to my sight—the containers of the Aimedratian food. Within the palaces I beheld many evidences of luxury, fine furniture, and peculiar instruments, the nature of which I did not understand at first.

The aerial palaces were not all on the same level. Some were much bigger than others. It did not take me long to perceive that the higher up a palace was situated the more beautiful it was, and the better equipped. But perhaps the most interesting thing about these mansions was the manner of ornament with which they were filled. Not a room in them but was lined with shelves and crowded with tables, and these were laden with a most curious assortment of objects, sculptured from a kind of compressed air, resembling things familiar to me on Earth. There were birds, and animals, and fish, and flowers, and fruits, and vegetables, and ships, and houses, and furnishings of all sorts, all done in miniature—reminding me of so many toys. There was hardly any object known on Earth that was not represented in the collection of one or more of the lords who lived in the palaces. The remarkable thing about these curios was that most of them were made not in exact copy but rather after the manner of a caricature. I could not yet understand whether this was due to a lack of talent on the part of the sculptors, or to an odd sense of humor which possessed them. Whatever the cause, the results were most delightful to behold.

By dint of very close observation I made sure after a time that the Aimedratians who were most royally garbed, who lived in the upper palaces, who had surplus of food, and owned these amazing collections of curios, were the same who were brought up by the currents in a condition of greatest personal translucency. Those who, on the contrary, were most poorly clothed, who lived in the bare houses on the surface, and commanded only minimum rations of food were the same persons whom

the currents brought up with many opaque spots in their ego forms. I could not help making some connection

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between the Aimedratians-state of translucency and their conditions in this land.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: My friend, is there any place we can rest awhile from the amazing sights of this land? I should like to hold intercommunication with you awhile uninterrupted."

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Let us seat ourselves right here on the gallery of this palace. I am sure its master would not object if he could see us."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Now you have mentioned one thing I wished to discuss—the fact that the people of this land can not see us."

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: That's simple. Their egoes are in a semi-torpid state hence their senses function very poorly. Now since you and I have been through a process—you will remember you experienced it on Nimikahara—which made our forms very white, and since the light of this land is similar in color to our translucent forms, we are in effect invisible to the Aimedratians! They see right through us!"

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: That's plain enough, and interesting too—to think of people looking right through my body as if it is fine glass. But now why do the people of this land speak to one another freely all the time? They do not direct the flow of their thoughts, as you and I do, to the person or persons for whom the message is intended, but utter it freely so that everyone who desires can hear anything spoken by any Aimedratian!"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: It is only the ego who loves privacy in many forms. Now the Aimedratians never do or say anything for which they think privacy is desirable—and their egoes are, as I have said, half a-sleep—

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hence you will find no privacy anywhere in the land."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Well, such despisement of privacy certainly seems strange to me."

As I spoke, two Aimedratian nobles, a man and a woman, came out upon the gallery, and I listened eagerly to their conversation.

"And so you will be unable to attend the festival today?" the woman was asking.

“I am sorry,” the man replied, “and I thank you very much for your invitation, but I expect to spend the day in Amlehedara. I ordered a model of a dream that I had recently, and I want to direct the finishing touches which will be applied today.”

“And you still place a great deal of faith in those dreams?”

“My dear lady, I am not inclined to debate with you today. However, it seems to me to be an unavoidable conclusion that those dreams which we and our neighbors enjoy every time we go to sleep are the memories of some other life that we lead while sleeping beneath the surface of our land.”

“Well, as for myself, I used to hold with your school, but as you know I have changed my views. The more I consider it the more I feel that those dreams are nothing but shadowy vapors. If they meant anything I am sure our learned men, in so many centuries, would have been able to piece together, out of so many dreams, the shreds of that life you believe in. But what has happened? The more dreams we mold in sculpture the more confused the other life becomes. Just a batch of contradictions. I can’t believe in them.”

“I am afraid, dear lady, you and the whole school to which you adhere are letting your logic run away

with you. See, now, I admit that our people dream in a very confusing way, and too much. But this is certain, that every time one of us falls asleep and descends beneath the surface he dreams. When he wakes up, he remembers something, which we call a dream. Does the fact that these remembrances are confusing, that they do not compose a complete picture, prove that they are nothing? No, they are surely something. Exactly what they are is hard to determine. But this much seems to me, and has seemed to many of the most learned of our people, to be a fair assumption: That when we fall beneath the surface we go to a different land and lead a different life there. We know that most of us spend twice as much time yonder than here at home. Can it be that two-thirds of our lives are wasted, as your school holds, in just floating around beneath the surface of our land dreaming dreams that have no basis in the life of our own land?”

“Your arguing is superb,” the lady hastened to concede, “but yet unsatisfactory. We who are privileged to live in the High Palaces have instruments for seeing and hearing the music of the planet worlds above.

Yet we cannot see beneath the black surface of our land, even those who live in the Highest Palaces and have the best instruments. Is it not because there is nothing there to see? I hold that beneath our surface is only a place for us to sleep, and no more. If there were a different world there, we would doubtless be able to see it—there is no reason why we should not."

"The mere fact that we do not see something proves nothing about its existence. Do we see where our Anozam comes from? Yet we find it daily in our dishes, some more and some less. We wake up, and there it is. Do we know where the houses and palaces we live in come

from? Yet there they are, and some must live below in plain homes, and we can go above and find a palace to occupy. We do not understand these things, which are in our own life here. But we know that our life here is a fact."

"My friend, why not carry your argument further and say that it is in the 'other world' during our sleep-life that we manufacture our Anozam, and clothing, and homes?"

"Dear lady! what a splendid idea! and from one who does not believe there is another world! Why, I must think about it, and bring it up at the academy in your name. It is splendid! Now this is a subject we shall have time to discuss, with our colleagues in the academies, more at leisure. You are anxious to complete arrangements for the festival, and I am expected at Amlehedara. Let us meet at the Learned Circle tomorrow."

"Tomorrow then, dear friend. And wise dreams to you."

With these words the lady floated gently down from the palace. The nobleman soon followed and I, curious to see what "model of a dream" he was having constructed, followed him, with Attarokib faithfully at my side.

The nobleman walked upon the streets in a rather hasty manner, unlike most of his class who, not being late for their appointments, took their leisure. As for myself, being unaccustomed to walking in the midst of such crowds—though they were all bound in the same direction, I was again and again in collision with the poor Aimedratians. I was sorry indeed for them, since they could not see what had hit them. Their professors, I had no doubt, would hear a good deal about these collisions, and it would be another mystery added to the

numerous problems which, I already perceived, bothered these good people.

C3. We came at last to Amlehedara, which, at first sight, seemed to be a mining center in the very midst of the city. The place consisted of a huge square of several miles in which grew a mountain of immense proportions. The mountain, divided into several hills, was composed of a substance somewhat less dense than the ground of Aimedrat and of many bright colors. In the surface of these mountains great caverns had been dug by centuries of industrious Aimedratians who removed quantities of the mountain's consistence as we on Earth would dig out pieces of quartz from a fruitful hill. Because the Aimedratians dug straight into the sides of the hills, instead of downward, (for they could not penetrate at will beneath the ground of their country) they had managed to cut out many long tunnels that crossed and recrossed one another.

The scene in this center of Aimedratian affairs reminded me of the busiest English fairs. Tens of thousands of the people were about, everyone engaged in one occupation or another. There were diggers, and carters, and artisans, and sellers, and buyers, wholesalers and retailers. But the final buyers, the ultimate purchasers of all the products of Amlehedara, were the castle dwellers. Several hundred of them were present at this time, most of them laden with wares that they had purchased, and they were buying yet more stuff. For all this they paid with Anozam, their sole medium of exchange, which, on examining, I discovered to be the very food they ate out of the round dishes. But while the poor people who lived in the street-houses had so little that they ate up as much as they found

daily, the nobles always found a generous surplus on the balconies of their palaces, using it to do business with in Amlehedara.

The nobles carried the Anozam in a special sort of bag attached to their forms. When they paid out a quantity of the precious commodity the recipients, with their agents, assistants, and families, consumed it on the spot!

And what are the articles which the Aimedratians manufacture in Amlehedara out of the matter they dig from the ample mountain? They are the ornaments, whose nature I have already partly described, which adorn the shelves and tables of the aerial palaces. I was now able to witness their

manufacture and disposal. Thousands of Aimedratians labor at the mountain, digging out with their hands what slices of it they can. As soon as one has enough material for his purpose, he comes out of the tunnel where he was working and begins shaping it into a form, as a sculptor molds his clay; or he turns it over to another for shaping. But I must remark that all the Aimedratians are highly gifted with the talent for sculpture, in which art they have great facility of expression of their ideas. It is only as a matter of convenience therefore that many of them occupy themselves with other forms of labor. When they have a model complete they turn it over for sale to an agent or to a member of the family, and return to work. When a sale is made the artists and miners are called to participate in consuming the price.

I was of course in no position to judge the Aimedratian scale of values. But it did seem to me, considering the ingenuity of some of the wares offered, that they brought a very small quantity of Anozam. This seemed especially true since there were usually from three to six

persons sharing in the proceeds of every sale. Yet the people seemed to be grateful for every particle they got, and eagerly interrupted whatever they were doing to gobble up their portion. They seemed to take the attitude of wondering that the owners of the Anozam were at all willing to part with any of their precious goods. I made sure incidentally that even the most successful salesmen and artists never earn enough to still their hunger for more Anozam.

The noble Aimedratian whom I was following easily made his way through the crowded caverns of Amlehedara, but could not seem to find the artist whom he was seeking. At last he accosted a young man who was digging out reddish matter from the side of a hill.

“Is not your father the artist whom I commissioned to make a dream model for me?”

“Yes, your honor, he is my father, and I am even now digging material for it.”

“Well, now, I have looked for him in all the usual places but find no trace of him. Hasn’t he awakened yet today?”

“O, he awoke quite early and began his work, but he had the misfortune to fall asleep a while ago.”

“Well, we can’t help that—we have no choice about falling asleep or waking up. If he awakens shortly tell him to seek me in the market—I am going to make some purchases there if I don’t fall asleep.”

“I will tell him, your honor. Wise dreams to you.”

Wondering greatly at the strange things I had recently heard, especially at the notion of people falling suddenly asleep and disappearing beneath the surface in the midst of their work, yet too intensely interested in the busy scene around me to consult my guide, I continued to follow the Aimedratian noble, desirous to see

what purchases he would make. As I walked, I tried to put together all the things I had seen and heard thus far in order to build up a picture of the life of these people. I had in mind their marvelous way of shooting up suddenly from beneath the ground, brought while yet asleep from some place, and their waking; the mixed opacity and translucency of their forms, and their remarkable clothing; their mysteriously supplied food—the Anozam; their queer surface houses and bizarre castles in the air; their dreams and their philosophizing; their combined mining, business, and art center, where their dreams were interpreted in most ingenious sculpture; all these things, and the others that I had heard and seen, I bore in mind, but could not put them together well enough to understand it all. My thoughts were interrupted when I saw him whom I was trailing accosted by an Aimedratian dressed in a comically tiny cap, a cloak that was far too large for him and dragged a yard along the ground behind him, and shoes so small that only his toes were in them, and he kept losing them and stooping to put them on his toes again. When I came up near them to listen they were already in the midst of their conversation. But I gathered soon enough that an effort was being made to sell a dream model, which the salesman held in his hand, to the nobleman.

I looked with a great deal of interest upon this exquisitely sculptured interpretation of an Aimedratian dream. It was a good example of the type of ornament that I had seen on the shelves and tables of the aerial palaces. This model consisted of a handsome horse, with some slight modifications in his appearance; instead of hoofs his long limbs ended with the webby feet of a duck—and, in addition to that, the sculptor had endowed him with what was plainly a cow’s udder!

The seller explained that this represented a machine out of which the persons in the artist's dream drew a fluid into large dishes, and then in turn spilled the fluid back into the machine's mouth. His impression was that that fluid was kept passing from the udder into the dish, from the dish into the "machine's" mouth, thence out again through the udder, and so on and on. The noble, who professed a good deal of interest in this masterpiece, was eager to know to what purpose the persons attended this odd machine. The seller hastily summoned the artist; but the latter confessed that he could not understand that side of it at all. The noble patron of Aimedratian art was much disappointed at the incompleteness of the information concerning the machine. He bought it nevertheless, confessing that he would have paid twice as much for it if the artist had dreamed more thoroughly.

To say that I was amazed at the explanation of this dream is to put it at its mildest. There could be no mistake about it that here was a confusion of horse and cow, with a little of duck, and milk and water and machine. I began again to piece together all the facts of Aimedrat, and in the light of this fresh knowledge a theory concerning them suggested itself. But before I had time to develope it or speak about it to Attarokib something distracted me which I desired greatly to see.

In a lane nearby that had been hitherto unoccupied I saw a maid and a man strolling together in a very affectionate attitude. I recognized the beautiful girl at once as the daughter of the man who had had the misfortune of striking my invisible self a; few hours ago. The man, then, who was with her, must be her suitor. I felt a curiosity to inform myself concerning the customs of courting in this marvelous land. When I suggested to Attarokib that we should follow them he consented at

once, assuring me that this would not be spying or eavesdropping since the people of Aimedrat were altogether indifferent about privacy. We drew then quite close to the lovers and I was able to see and hear all that passed between them.

To confess the truth there was nothing especially interesting in their conduct or in their conversation. I have no doubt that countless scenes exactly like this one are taking place on Earth all the time. The youth was protesting his admiration and affection for the maiden in terms that left no

room for doubt—and in Aimedrat he certainly was not uttering untruths. I had made sure that the highly moral people of Aimedrat did not even know the meaning of untruth or any form of deception. Thus the sculptor of the queer horse I have described could have profited greatly by inventing some reason for that animal and the attention he said it received. But he never thought of doing such a thing. He stated what he remembered, or thought he remembered, about it; for the rest he confessed his ignorance. So in this instance I could not doubt the young man's sincerity when he declared that since just ten days ago he had been inspired with such a great love for her that his soul would never know another moment of peace until she consented to have her Anozam at one table with him, and strive together with him to earn a worthy posterity. He painted a glowing picture of their future happiness, dwelling on the points that if they would announce their marriage they would wake up the following day in front of a new house which would thenceforth be their own home; and that some time later a third dish of Anozam would appear suddenly at their home which would be followed within a little while by the arrival, from somewhere underneath

the surface, of a young baby which would be their own child.

At last he seemed satisfied that he had put his proposal in the finest style customary in Aimedrat. With a last word imploring her to regard his suit favorably he paused to hear her reply. I had, in the meantime, studied them both carefully, and felt confident, by the brightness in the maid's eyes, that there was no danger of a tragic rejection. She hesitated a moment, as if to collect her thoughts, and at last began.

"My dear, it is also just ten days since I suddenly began to think about you, and now that you have uttered your fair proposal—"

And that was the last that she communicated to him at that time. Suddenly there was a flash of light in her forehead; up she went a yard into the air, and then down she sank through the very ground and vanished, leaving her poor lover in a temper of misery and perplexity hardly conceivable. It was more than I could do, to imagine what had suddenly caused the young girl to "fall asleep" at that moment. As for the poor fellow, his countenance indicated the depth of his despair, and, I thought, a feeling akin to personal insult. Nevertheless I saw him resolutely start forward along an avenue that led out of Amlehedara and into the city proper. Putting myself in his place I thought that I would go and wait in

front of her home in the hope that she would reawaken shortly. And this was probably what he did.

I did not continue to watch this Romeo's adventures, but I prayed that his hopes should be immediately realized and that, when the currents fetched his Juliet up, she would waste no more time in formal preliminaries but cry out "yes" before even they had exchanged a greeting. Fine speeches and romantic dialect are good

enough in their place, thought I, but in Aimedrat a brief word might be worth more than a dish of Anozam!

Returning into the crowded lanes of Amlehedara I spent an hour in carefully observing the people at work, and particularly in listening to the salesmen disposing of their wares to the nobles, for from their sales talk and explanations I learned a great deal. It was a pleasant enough experience, marred only by the inconvenience arising from the fact that the Aimedratians could not see me, so that all the care necessary to avoid jostling fell upon me—and if I forgot to watch a moment someone was sure to try to walk right through me, with results highly mystifying to him or her who made the attempt.

The first thing that attracted my attention was an attempted sale to two noblewomen. The artist brought forth a beautiful carving of a blue elephant that had golden windows in his sides, with open shutters, a square red trunk shaped like brickwork, that stood up above his head like a chimney, and two rows of big golden buttons upon his back.

"This, my ladies," the artist declared, "is one of my most perfect dreams. I remember well that it was a huge, living creature; sometimes it walked with its fat legs, and sometimes it flew in the air, making motions forward and back with these things sticking out of its side. All the while there issued loud, clamorous music from the opening of this red tower in front of its head!"

"What do you think of it?" the younger lady asked her companion.

"It seems to be a very noble creature from the 'other world', in some respects similar to one I saw in my brother's palace. But the other had a round tower, instead of this square one, and it did not stand up but hung down. There were other differences, but on the

whole I think this one must be superior. It's the tower that makes me think so. We know very well a tower should be standing up, not hanging down!"

"That is wisely spoken. Do you advise me then to purchase it?"

"By all means do so. No doubt it is imperfect. But I can borrow the one my brother owns and we will compare them. Between the two, and with the assistance of our friends, we may be able to learn something about the other life."

"Well, then, I will buy it. We shall have an interesting discussion concerning it—and at the least it will make a fine ornament for the new shelf I am having installed in my observatory."

Following these words she paid the happy sculptor his price in Anozam and departed with the precious purchase. I could not help laughing at this strange mixture of elephant with a chimney that was mistaken for a musical instrument, and windows in his sides with shutters that were mistaken for wings, and—to cap it all—buttons on his back, with no explanation for them at all!

C4. Satisfied at last concerning the art and commerce of the land, I resolved to see its educational institutions, of which I had heard so much mention. Attarokib expressed his willingness to take me to the Academies of Aimedrat, but he warned me that I would find them rather different from those I had attended on Earth. This made me all the more eager to visit them, and we therefore proceeded at a rapid pace. I kept looking for some large structure, but as far as my sight extended I saw only the evenly laid out streets with their peculiar residences—roof, table and chairs, all hanging unsupported in the air. At last we came to a great open

space, shaped like a circle, perhaps a mile in diameter, occupied by row after row of the legless Aimedratian chairs, upon which sat thousands of people, of both sexes and of all ages—from children of a year to sages of a hundred years.

On the outer edges of this circle of learning, and all around it, was a series of high platforms occupied by the learned professors who delivered the lectures and led the discussions. My method of acquainting myself with the system of this curious college was to seat myself at the very center of the circle. By turning slightly in my seat I was able to face each platform in turn and give my attention to the speakers on it or to the debate centering

around it. I observed, after a while, that quite a few of the students used this very means of passing from class to class—they simply turned a few inches in their seats!

I did not stay long in the first class that I joined. Though the students were chiefly boys and girls of fourteen and fifteen years, I discovered shortly that the subject of the class was beyond my comprehension. They were studying the sixth dimension! As I turned, literally turned, from class to class, my respect for the spiritual capacity of these strange beings grew and grew. They discoursed with marvelous understanding of the profoundest intricacies of mathematics—five dimensions being common knowledge among children of twelve years—they treated of philosophy, of Eternity, time, light, space, mind, with a depth, and freedom, and confidence in their knowledge that amazed me.

Much of what they said was unintelligible to me because I had not heard the fundamental principles upon which their learning is based. I was profoundly impressed, however, with the certainty that although they

blunder pathetically in trying to grope through the veil of darkness which hides their sleeping life from Aimedratian view, they are immeasurably wise in all other things. I heard children of twelve or thirteen propound questions of a highly philosophical nature, and imbibe the intricately woven answers, in a manner that would do credit to the most advanced scholars in our universities. My understanding of their discussions being woefully limited I could not form an accurate judgment of their value. But I was convinced that in the field of learning which may be termed spiritual they have true knowledge, although in the concerns of their sleeping, and the things connected with it, they see only a jumble of hazy facts, as in a dream. Their capacity for learning is so vast, however, that most persons attaining the age of twenty have reached the limit of their definite know!' edge; and after that age they come to the circle of learning to attend the higher classes—those engaged in the study of the mysteries of the sleep life.

In these classes most of the conditions are reversed. No longer did I hear the professors expounding their wondrous knowledge with assurance. Here they offered only theories, suppositions, based on the numerous dream models that were wrought in Amlehedara, and were present in large numbers upon the platform as illustrations. And here, in the classes of

higher learning, I was better able to understand what was spoken than in the children's classes!

A great part of the Aimedratians' time, and especially that of the castle-dwellers, is thus occupied with the dream-products. They study in the circle, exchange scholarly views, and hold earnest lectures, which are always well attended, where they propound their newest theories. Very often these theories contradict one another,

according to the contradictory nature of the latest models produced in Amlehedara. At such times fiery debates take place between the differing parties, and they are never settled until a new model is manufactured which throws enough light on the disputed subject to nullify both old theories in favor of two or three fresh ones.

In view of the character of the materials with which these highly intelligent beings are forced to work, the theories they propound are most ingenious. As I think back now upon their models, knowing the truth about them, their endless speculations and fluctuating conclusions seem very comical. Nevertheless a large school of them have succeeded in building up a most interesting structure of the probable life about which they dream. It happens that there is little likeness between this popular theory and the actual truth about their sleep-life, but it is not less interesting or learned on that account. The only fault with it, preventing them from unanimously accepting it as true, is that a few essential stages in it are missing, so that it resembles a house having the first and third stories, with a great emptiness where the second story should be. They hope always, however, that some super-dreamer will one day wake up with the missing story in his brain. Seeing how far they were from any possibility of hitting upon the truth, I could scarcely help hoping that the absent link in their chain of suppositions would soon be evolved in some dreamer's erratic memory so that they will at least think they have discovered the truth of their sleep life.

From what I heard by dint of much revolving in my chair I gathered a fairly general idea of the Aimedratian understanding of their present and future. They believe their own life to be caused by a temporary expulsion

from Eternity (such is their term). They await calmly the day of their recall thither—when they shall fall into the last sleep and return no more to

Aimedrat. They hold that every person has a palatial home somewhere high in the atmosphere. In order to rise up to a sufficient height to meet it he must become wholly, or nearly all, translucent—a theory based upon the fact that the castle- dwellers are the most translucent persons in the land. To become translucent, they believe, a person must eat a great deal of Anozam. Once a person has had a sufficient feast of Anozam to banish the opaque spots in his form he can rise up and draw down his palace. And once he has succeeded in this, there is always a sufficient supply of Anozam there to keep him up. He can then live quite satisfactorily until the last sleep, when he floats away together with his palace to the better worlds.

Such is their curious belief; and because the best fortune of an Aimedratian, as they understand it, consists, of getting a good feast of Anozam, they are eager to do business in Amlehedara. They hope sometime, by chance, to earn a really large enough quantity of Anozam; after which, they suppose, they will have no more difficulty in attaining their palaces in the atmosphere and remaining therein. To them loss of translucency seems to result from undernourishment, hence their eager pursuit of extra Anozam. They believe, however, that if they are not lucky enough to obtain a quantity of Anozam during their life-time they will be united with their true homes after their last sleep, so that their good fortune is at worst only delayed. In this faith all the Aimedratians are agreed. They therefore strive to look forward to the last sleep without fear. Nevertheless those who are not largely translucent are worried to the point of melancholy. They are like Earthmen who

know themselves to be suffering from a fatal malady and therefore pretend to have made peace with the inevitable end, but in reality they dread its oncoming because they are not so sure of what lies in the unknown beyond.

The last sleep, to the Aimedratians, certainly means the same thing as Earthly death. If a sleeper’s Anozam fails to appear several times in succession they surmise that he is gone on his last sleep. They do not weep or mourn for him. But his friends show a good deal of malaise for some while; they appear distracted and even miserable. They seem to feel that the consequences of the last sleep are not exactly as their best belief teaches, and the doubt on this score bothers them and leaves them under the strain of misgiving.

Because of the peculiar circumstances under which I attended the Amiedratian academy, even my stay in that peaceful place was not without its incident. As I sat listening to a very interesting discourse in which the lecturer was demonstrating the probabilities and improbabilities of the existence of the “other world” in which some believed the Aimedratians live when they disappear underneath the surface, I suddenly felt a weight upon me. I jumped up, realizing at once that someone, not seeing my invisible self, had attempted to occupy my chair, and in doing so had sat down on my lap. The result of my sudden rising was that I threw the lady—for a woman it was, and she had scarcely had time to begin wondering what it could be that she had sat down upon—over on her face. Of course she issued a scream and soon had the vicinity in confusion. By the time everything was quieted Attarokib and I had made our way to a different part of the Circle. But I made no further effort to sit.

Not long after this little adventure I felt suddenly a great wave of excitement in the massed assemblage. The various lecturers left their platforms. Only one platform remained occupied, and that was the largest of all. I recognized upon it the noblewoman whom I had seen in one of the aerial palaces, and from this I judged that the festival of which she had spoken was about to be held. I soon learned that after long and painstaking eh forts a banquet had been arranged in honor of one of the greatest, most esteemed of teachers and scholars in the Academies of Aimedrat. The richest nobles had donated large portions of their surplus Anozam, which was distributed to the masses as soon as the guest of honor, with certain of his prominent friends who were privileged to appear upon the platform, had taken their places.

I gathered that such occasions were rare because of the difficulties involved in arranging them. It had begun, according to plan, within an hour of the awakening of the guest of honor. One after another there stood up the notables who were privileged to appear upon the platform. In brief and restrained phrases they described the greatness of the guest of the day, praised his wisdom, extolled his knowledge, testified to his devotion to the cause of public education. From their words I understood that I was in the presence of a really great spirit, for the people of Aimedrat do not lie or

bandy in empty compliments. I felt a keen personal interest to hear what this admirable savant would say on such an occasion. Finally, and indeed within scarcely twenty minutes of the beginning of the introductions, the great educator arose and began in a simple and unaffected way to deliver his oration.

"My beloved friends, I—"

This was just as far as he got. Suddenly the cursed flash was seen in his forehead. His eyes closed, his form rose up into the air, and down he went through the very platform, vanishing as if he had never existed. And this after they had taken the precaution to begin early enough to have, according to the length of the learned man's usual "waking period," at least five hours for the festival!

C5. It was more than I could bear calmly. I had had all I wanted of these mysterious happenings. I took my guide by the hand and led him into a quiet street. Walking slowly in the middle of the street—where, I had learned, there was no danger of our being struck by Aimedratians arriving from below, I questioned my guide.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Now please tell me what is all this. Who are the people of Aimedrat, where do they go to and where do they come from?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: And you have formed no opinion yourself? You have no notion at all about them after all you saw here?"

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: I am no longer in any mood for guessing at mystifications. I have thought they have some connection with Earth. It seems to me that it is Earth they must be visiting when they go below the surface. But what they do there I cannot imagine—unless they be ghosts who haunt my planet!"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Nonsense! There are no ghosts haunting the Earth. These people are the living Earthmen themselves!"

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: What do you say? These are the inhabitants of Earth? But how is it possible? I knew nothing about this! When do they come here?"

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Calm yourself! Don’t be so excited! This is by no means the most astonishing thing in Niames. I will explain it to you in a few words and you will understand everything. The people of Aimedrat are the sleeping people of Earth! When a body falls asleep on Earth the currents you have seen snatch up his ego and fetch it instantly to Aimedrat. When anything disturbs his body, an electric fluid instantly is in motion fetching him back to his Earthbody!”

I paused where I was and stared at Attarokib in wonder. I stood there for perhaps five minutes, a thousand thoughts coursing through my mind, without uttering a word. So many matters that I had been unable to understand were suddenly clear! The mysterious arrival and departure of the people—which they called “waking” and “falling asleep” but which were just the reverse, actually their falling asleep and waking upon Earth! The poor state of their senses, their indifference to privacy, their lack of definite memory of the Earth—due to the fact that their egoes were semi-torpid, just barely enough awake to give each of them a touch of personality! And their great spiritual capacity, their wonderful understanding of profound matters, their artistic talent—due to the condition of their souls, which had changed roles with the egoes in being the more awakened member! Their “dreams”—plainly enough the faint remembrances of the soul’s experiences on Earth; the artist who dreamed the horse I have described was probably a farmer on Earth, and he who had dreamed the elephant was probably a builder who had recently attended a circus! I began to laugh at the thought.

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: I love humor, my friend. Let me appreciate your enjoyment too.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: O, I am laughing at a great many things. For one, I have just realized why the learned professor vanished just when he did.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: You have? That was a little more than I could do. What do you suppose was the cause of his waking up on Earth just then?”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Did you notice that just before his disappearance the lady whom he escorted to the banquet—his wife apparently—sank through the platform?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Yes, I observed it, and so did everyone else. But in Aimedrat no one disturbs himself when a lady falls asleep at her husband’s lectures, or the other way around.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Ah, but therein lies the reason for his disappearance too. She woke up herself on Earth, and promptly woke her husband up—to ask him whether he had not forgotten to shut the kitchen windows!”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: You think so? Well, it is likely that wives have not changed on Earth since I knew them there.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Fun aside, there are one or two things not perfectly clear to me. Why, for instance, the partial opacity of the forms of our friends here?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: That is one of the mysterious workings of the human form about which you will learn later. For the present I will tell you just that when a person does an evil thing, that part of his form which was concerned loses its translucency. If someone strikes a fellowman his fist is likely to become opaque: if he steals, his fingers; if he refuses to go to the aid of a person

in distress, his feet; if he gossips or listens to gossip, his lip or ears. And so on and on.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: How interesting! I can imagine various reasons why all the parts of the body may become opaque. Yet not one thing—there goes a man with his nose as black as night. How on Earth can he do any wrong with his nose?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Well, perhaps he sticks it too much into other people’s affairs!”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: You will have your joke!”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: No! I am in earnest!”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Really? Well, I would like to see my nose in a mirror—after the way I have been behaving here.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: You could not see if it was opaque because the process you went through on Nimikahara has clothed your whole form in such whiteness as the light of this land. Then again, it is no wrong here—first because we are privileged to a certain extent, second and chiefly because the people here do not desire privacy, so you have violated no right of theirs. And finally, don’t desire to learn anything about yourself. The

moment you learn anything about yourself in Niames you will have to go back to Earth—possibly only for a very brief stay."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: But I have been learning about myself in all you have told me and in what I have seen of Aimedrat—for does not all this apply to me as to any Earthman?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: I meant only things about your personal self. There is no danger in your learning these general things, or about your present condition."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Thank you for warning me. And now let me ask you—the sight of that man reminds

me—what of the queer clothing on the people here?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: That, and whether they live in the common houses or in a palace, depends upon their state of translucency, that is upon the manner of their individual Earth-life. Those who are vain, for instance, will have large garments, small hats, and so forth. Those who indulge in trivial, worthless activities, will have undersized clothing."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: How does the state of translucency effect the individual's place of residence?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Quite a simple process; when the opaque parts of an ego's anatomy are large, or numerous, their weight, equaling the weight of his wrongdoings, makes it impossible for him to rise up in the air."

"Sepsafem to. Attarokib: Simple is not the word for it. I would say ingenious and marvelous. And what is the purpose of this life-in-sleep? Is it a form of reward and punishment for the life during the day?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: It must seem so, yet it is not for that purpose that the egoes of sleeping Earthmen live in Aimedrat. It is on account of the Anozam, which is a form of nourishment necessary to the soul to replace the drainage upon its powers by the ego during the day on Earth."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Then why the difference in the quantity of its distribution?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Those who are most opaque, as you have noticed, receive least Anozam. The result is that they remain soul-hungry. Now often, because the ego here is not dead asleep, a person on Earth remembers vaguely his soul's shame in Aimedrat on account of its inferior condition—you call it the pangs

of conscience. This, together with the person's soul-hunger, sometimes leads him or her to give up certain wrongdoings or to occupy himself with good deeds, thereby recovering translucency. So you see, this Aimedratian life is of great usefulness to the inhabitants of Earth."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: That's quite evident. Now just another question. What is the arrangement of marriage here—and why, as I have heard, are couples sometimes suddenly separated?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: When persons on Earth are courting, they do so here too, with the difference that here they court only those whom they will actually marry. So that, though you saw ardent and anxious wooing, there was no danger of a refusal. There has never been a jilting in Aimedrat. But the young men do not take account of that fact and behave as if they had to win their mates against difficulties. It is very romantic and delightful to the sweethearts. As for the separations you have heard of, a great difference in behavior results in husband or wife dwelling in a castle while the other remains below. Or if one betrays the other, the result in Aimedrat is that the betrayers wake up together in front of a new home, with clothing quite distorted. And those who thus lose their own homes and are separated from their families are not very happy here. Their friends and neighbors think they have become 'mad' and pity them."

As Attarokib was talking I had observed an interesting scene a little way off. A young Aimedratian mother, with a tiny infant clasped in her arms, was met by a group of matrons who, womanlike, were quick to display all their natural fancy for young babies. They were manifestly eager to view the child; and the mother,

who declared that he would be just six weeks old come three days, was hardly less eager to show him off. Her friends had gathered in a circle about her. As they bent close, she stretched forth her arms to show them her treasure. But before they had a chance to glimpse him I saw the baby go up, and down, and disappear under neath the ground!

For a moment the sight of a mother deprived of her infant in such a brutal manner was a severe shock to me. I was so bewildered by it that I hastened over to the disappointed circle as if I could render some assistance, as if I expected to see the mother fall into a swoon instantly.

Instead she rose up and went down, right after her infant, thereby relieving a tense and embarrassing situation.

Very Stout Fella, thought I, recalling the cause of it all; he woke up screaming so lustily that he roused his mother right after him!

Shortly after this I saw the Aimedratians, one after another, disappear beneath the ground of their land, where the waiting currents bore them down with speed faster than lightning to their waking bodies on Earth. I judged that in the particular part of Earth which this place in Aimedrat represented it must be morning. And as I saw the speed with which the numerous egoes plunged down through the nitroxic ocean, I was reminded of a curious thing.

Many times my sleep on Earth had been disturbed by fantastic dreams which ended, with my awaking, just as I was falling from an enormous height. I had often wondered, as I do not doubt many of my readers have wondered more or less often, why we awaken so many times from our dreams with the remembrance that we were lastly falling from a terrific eminence. Of course

our scientists have proposed several more or less plausible explanations for this strange phenomenon. But none of these had ever quite appealed to me as answering all the difficulties of the problem. Now the true solution was before me. As I watched the Aimedratian egoes dropping down through space toward their clay bodies on Earth the simple truth became plain to me. It is this lightning-like plunge that we remember as the concluding part of so many of our dreams. Attarokib confirmed me in this view.

The city was now rapidly emptying of its inhabitants. Soon only the late sleepers would remain, a sorry company probably. I therefore proposed to Attarokib that we go on to some other city representing a place where it was now night on Earth.

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Do you feel that you have not seen all there is of Aimedratian life?”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: I am sure I have seen all that was important and interesting here. But will there not be the usual interesting differences between life in different lands?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Not in Aimedrat, my friend. The whole country is exactly as you have seen it here, except that in the space between inhabited places are unoccupied houses.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Then if we have seen everything worth while here what shall we do?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: It will be daytime in Niames by now, so let us spend the day in one of the parks.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Just as you say. I am ready to go—almost glad to go from here. Seeing all these persons sinking through the ground almost makes me

feel afraid that I’ll happen to follow them in a moment—”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: If this were a dream it would not be at all unlikely. However, there’s no danger of it—the ground of Aimedrat would continue to support you if we chose to stay. But we are off for Sibbatmikah—the park of crystal, so grip your girdle and come.”

And suiting action to his advice my guide was aloft in a moment with myself right at his side. We soon left Aimedrat behind and soared a long way in the beautiful light of Niames. As we flew we discussed our interesting visit, and among other things my guide asked me what had struck me most about the people of Aimedrat.

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: I should say that I was struck most by the people who tried to walk through me—”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: You accused me not long ago of being inclined to joke, and yet you seem to be in a bantering mood yourself—of which I am glad, for it indicates that you have enjoyed your visit.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Indeed, I enjoyed it tremendously. But, in earnest, I was chiefly impressed by the unhappy arrangement whereby the Aimedratians are suddenly tom from the midst of whatever they are doing. They lead a full life in Aimedrat, and have only vague notions about a possible other life, so that their existence in Aimedrat means everything to them. Yet no one of them can be sure that he will not suddenly, in the midst of a most important or interesting occupation, sink through the ground and vanish—perhaps never to return!”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Yes, that is sad.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: It did sadden my stay there a bit to see some of the annoying disappearances. But I console myself for it with a good lesson that I derived from it.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: And what was that valuable lesson?”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: That a person living on Earth ought to have, very regular sleeping hours—then he can be sure of the utmost convenience in his life in Aimedrat.”

As I communicated this last thought to my smiling guide we were alighting in front of a huge gate of sheer crystal.

CHAPTER SIX
THE CRYSTAL PARK

The feast of the senses—Niamesian entertainment—A remarkable view of the planets and the life upon them—We depart to visit the dusty planet.

C1. We found the crystal gate open wide. Entering without hesitation my guide and I chose a luxurious seat in a bower surrounded by a delightful variety of flowers and plants. There was no need to ask why Attarokib had called Sibbatmikah the crystal park. Not only was the park covered with an expansive canopy of purest crystal—or rather with an ethereal substance that resembled it in all its qualities—but even the ground was of a silvery gray crystal-like consistence. Seats and fountains too were of crystal, as well as grandiose statues representing globe-like planets. Even stems of trees and flowers were crystalline—but not the leaves, petals, and fruit. These last were composed of some ethery substance glistening in a limitless variety of hues which yielded up for each separate plant an aroma that suggested its pleasant taste.

No sooner had we made ourselves comfortable in the bower than the fragrant aroma and taste-suggestion

of a nearby tree created in me a desire to taste its fruit, which appeared not unlike a large Spanish plum. I was a good deal surprised to feel this inclination. I had thought, after the process of claynullation on Nimikahara, that whilst I remained in my present state I should not know the semblance of a desire to eat. Before I had time to consider this issue the tree extended one of its branches and dropped a specimen of its fruit right into my lap.

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Take it. It is not food for a clayen stomach, which you have not got, but for such a one as you are; and you will be pleased with its taste.'"

Being thus reassured I made the motions of swallowing the fruit as I had seen the Aimedratians do with their Anozam. It was, in effect, like consuming something less than ether. But the sensation it produced in all my person exceeded all the delight I ever had known in food before. There was no basis of comparison with anything I had tasted throughout my remembrance.

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: And is this the real taste of food? Why, it is a million times better than the best on Earth!”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: I know it, for I once tasted Earthly food myself. But you should have noticed by now that the degree of excellence of things in Niames holds true with regard to all the senses. Have you not perceived the music, the speech—which you hear although no sound is produced? Have you not marveled to behold with clarity all the distant stars?”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Truly, I have not failed to observe all these unending sources of astonishment. But what causes my senses to excel themselves in Niames beyond their Earthly scope?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: The senses here in fact are not superior. They are on Earth, as in Niames, endless powers of the spirit. Belonging to the human ego, they are agents of the soul. On Earth, shut in by the clay, the ego must look through eyes of flesh, smell through a nose of flesh, listen through ears of flesh, taste through a palate of flesh. You thus obtain of the smell and taste, sound and appearance of things only an impression debased, as you would receive of this flower’s color if you saw it through your flesh eyes. But in Niames the senses are free. You hear and see, smell and taste with senses unintercepted by a fleshy cloak. Not even the substances of air that interfere with the senses on Earth are present to befog them in Niames. Here you know all things as they are. And that is why they seem to you incalculably finer.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: May I ask if it is deliberately that you have avoided mentioning the sense of touch? Now that I think on it, I do not recall exercising this sense here in such improved condition as the others.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Certainly touch in Niames may be felt in the same infinite degree as all the other senses. But you cannot sense real touch here because of your present status. Had you come to stay permanently with us, or if you could be admitted to Aiahatnig, the park of the Masters of Niames, where immaterial touch—contact with Eternity—is experienced, you would learn about it. This, however, is one of the few privileges not open to tourists in all Niames.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: I shall not regard this as a disappointment. Doubtless there is a great reason for this law, and I should be ungrateful if I complained. Let me therefore think no more about it. Tell me rather, if

you please, whether I have surmised well that the intellect of man on Earth is impaired in the same degree as his senses because he must exercise it through a brain of flesh.’”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: To some extent this is quite true. But it would be preferable, I believe, that your last question, and many others like it which are bound to occur to you, should be answered by your own observation rather than by my explanations. Wait, therefore, until after you have visited the many lands of Niames. I think you will regard this suggestion with favor.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: I am happy to know that I shall have opportunity to see so much here.”

Following these words we arranged between us that I should continue to register all my questions mentally but Attarokib would reply only to a few. Those which he ignored, I was to understand, I would in future find answered among the things I should observe.

C2. I tasted some more of the fruits of the garden and enjoyed the individual fragrance of many a gorgeous flower. Since I am not to experience the sense of touch here, thought I, it will do no harm to make the utmost of those not denied to me.

No sooner had this idea formed itself in my mind than every tree and flower in the immediate vicinage bent over toward me, offering me an opportunity to enjoy its taste or fragrance. Mortal flesh can not conceive such deliciousness of flavor and aroma as I found in the park of Sibbatmikah. Satiated at last with these delights, I abandoned them for the present, closing at the same time my senses of sight whilst I opened up my sense of hearing. Instantly there came to me a song out of the

ether sweeter than any I ever heard on Earth, melodious beyond my earlier capacity to imagine. Enraptured, I opened wider my sense of hearing. There came a harmony of music from about me so exquisite that I was sure a person in the clay would faint from the incomparable sweetness of it. I understood how Lot’s wife turned into a lump of salt, for I felt as if I were turning into a mass of sugar.

I sat for hours imbibing the charms of Niames alternately through the senses of sight, smell, taste and hearing. It took my guide a full minute to rouse me from my gluttonous dream.

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Ah! This is no music. You have here a paradise. I should not tire to stay an eternity content with just what I am now privileged to enjoy.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: I can guess what you have in mind. Having viewed our scenery, heard our music, tasted our fruit, and smelled our flowers, you do not see what other advantages might be enjoyed in experiencing the sense of touch in the park of the Masters—which is the only Niamesian park superior to Sibbatmikah. But truly they who enter once the park of the Niamesian Masters.no longer look upon these delights with anything but indifference. You can no more imagine what touch is like in Aiahatnig than you could conceive on Earth what smell is like in this park of crystal. But I may weary you with tales of a place to which I cannot take you. Really, I hope some day you may come to stay with us permanently and be admitted to Aiahatnig.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Nothing you say can weary me. Yet you have rightly understood my feelings. I am of opinion that the free senses of sight, smell, taste and hearing as I can exercise them here in Sibbatmikah

are unsurpassable. In this wondrous crystal garden the things that I long to know seem to grow familiar to me as I look, and hear, and breathe, and swallow. If I am going to shut a few of my senses off now it is only that I may not be distracted temporarily in the use of my sense of sight. I have begun to feel a strong yearning to observe some of the planets more in detail, and I note that through the crystal canopy overdecking this park one can see them as clearly as if they were right nearby.”

This was indeed the truth. A few casual glances upward had revealed to me the apparent closeness and detailed visibility of the distant stars. Only because there were so many, and so much to see upon each that I could not resolve where to direct my sight, had I refrained hitherto from more than a momentary glimpse of them.

With Attarokib’s approval I prepared to make somewhat of a study of a number of the nearer planets. A rapid observation revealed that each planet is a world teeming with life, inhabited by millions of human beings, like our own Earth. Closer study revealed the fact—one that profoundly impressed me—that no sign of unhappiness or ill fortune was to be found upon any of them. I searched in vain for a trace of sickness or worry, a

vestige of bitterness or strife. Everywhere joy and contentment, peace and affluence, were supreme.

Deftly Attarokib detached a crystal leaf that grew upon one of the trees. He offered it to me with the assurance that it would make a telescope for the comprehension of every minute detail upon any planet. And he added that I should take full advantage of the enjoyment of the flora of Sibbatmikah because they were endowed with the capacity to increase human understanding. This

advice I did not neglect to follow. And peering through the ethery instrument Attarokib had offered me, which proved to be all that he had claimed for it, I continued my examination of the stellar worlds. Each moment strengthened my original convictions.

Beautiful and healthy men and women were the inhabitants of the planets. They played in lovely gardens like to those of Niames and lived in princely mansions—all, without exception. They were garbed in splendid raiment, colorful, original, and beautiful. The light of happiness shone from their faces. All the people indulged in one or more of the arts. Music and dancing were common accomplishments. Hard though I searched I could find nothing that marred the paradisial note of the planetary scenes. No trace of poverty or disease, of slavery or suffering, obtruded itself. The obvious happiness of life upon the planets was like an open book before me. I beheld the stellarians in all their joy giving praise and thanks to the Creator Who endowed them with all the blessings they owned.

What struck me as particularly noteworthy was the fact that although there was but the one universal language upon all the planets, no two of them used the same script. But in each separate script I recognized an individual rendition of the universal language of thought.

I was profoundly interested to observe the bird-like locomotion of the stellarians. Not only did they fly from place to place upon each planet but I saw many groups, and not a few individuals, making interstellar journeys. They did not require machinery of transit, yet they were not, as might be supposed, wholly spiritual. They were composed of a substance which, while far less crude than Earthly clay, and suitable for the atmosphere and

climate of any planet, or for interstellar space, decidedly was material.

Among the things I observed that caused me to marvel most was the fact that objects which on Earth are known as inanimate on the planets are only partly so. The stellarians can cause, by exercise of their will, any object they desire to approximate itself to them. This recalled to me how, in the very crystal park where I sat at the time, whatever I longed for bent right over toward me or fell into my lap. Not once did I see a stellarian go out of his way for anything. Instead, objects would suddenly leave their place and offer themselves to some individual. That this person always took possession of the object indicated clearly that he had wished for it. I only marveled that no conflicts were engendered by two of the stellarians wishing for the same thing. I took it for granted that this must be due to the abundant duplication of all things.

Here were worlds worth living in, thought I, and I expressed myself accordingly to my guide. In especial I mentioned approvingly the ability of the people to travel from planet to planet, and the ease with which desired objects were obtained.

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Be not surprised at these things. The people are free citizens of the universe. It is their birthright to obtain what they desire with the utmost facility. As for visiting other planets than their own, this is a privilege that they are required to earn—and they do earn it. There is no reason why the free citizens of the universe should be cursed with a want of happiness, since they pursue only goodness and truth."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: I have been wondering why we people of Earth are exceptional in that ours is a

life without the happiness of the other planets. Shall I regard your last words as an explanation?"

Although I had directed this last thought to Attarokib no reply was forthcoming. My guide sat with eyes intent upon watching a scene on a planet almost directly above us. Since he had surely received my question I judged that I should have to learn this answer by later observation.

C3. Filled with astonishment and deep meditation by what I beheld, I removed my gaze for a moment from the scene above and turned to look all

around me. Thousands of people now occupied seats in the park, each of them using crystal leaves like mine.

My wish to know who these persons were drew an immediate answer.

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: They are residents of one or another part of Niames, not, like yourself, visitors. But like you they find it interesting to observe the universe, and particularly certain parts of it, from this point of vantage. There is no place where one may learn so much of all that has to do with the worlds of the universe as here in Sibbatmikah. This crystal park was specially designed for the convenience of those bent upon the pursuit of learning.”

His reply brought to my mind that no one had ever told me what sort of place Niames was. Neither my friends of Nimikahara nor my present guide had given me enough information about Niames to enable me to understand what it might mean to be a permanent dweller in this land of marvels. My questions on this subject drew no immediate answer. I put these thoughts away for the time, resuming my observations of the watching throng about me.

At once I was struck by the fact that most of them were looking down through the bottom of the garden instead of up as I had been doing. Forgetting again that I was merely to register my questions, I addressed my guide directly.

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: May I know what place it is that all these inhabitants of Niames are watching so absorbedly?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: This is a question I would have answered even if you had only registered it in your mind. That place is the dusty planet Zu. Most of these Niamesians have kinsmen there in whose adventures they take interest—hence their observations both day and night. You might glance at it yourself. I believe it should hold as much attraction for you as any planet—perhaps more than some others.”

My attention was instantly captured when Attarokib named the “dusty” planet. I had found no signs of dust or filth upon any of the stars that I had seen as yet. Here was one, then, which was at least in this respect different from the rest. Without further hesitation I adjusted my crystal leaf and fixed my gaze below. The surprise that greeted me was not altogether unexpected.

I beheld, first, a planet situated only a few thousand miles away from Niames—the nearest of the planets. But is was in every detail so radically different from all the others that my fancy was instantly drawn to it. Whilst the other planets had appeared bright and lustrous, Zu was dark and unreflecting. Not a ray of light shone from it. At first I was inclined to think it our Earth, but when later I noticed things upon it which I had never seen on Earth I concluded that my first judgment may have been rather too hasty.

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Having beheld the strange nature of the activities upon Zu, I conceived a very strong desire to ask a multitude of questions concerning their meaning. I feared, however, to annoy the patient guide with my queries. I thought instead that I might be able to find my own answers if I would spend some time in watching this dusty planet. I appealed on this score to the guide.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: The planet you call Zu seems most interesting to me. I should like to occupy some time in a fuller observation of it—or, if possible, to visit it. I wonder if it will be long before we must leave this park?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: There's no hurry about leaving the park—we have no closing hours here. However, your desire to visit that planet appeals to me. It is very long since I have been there myself."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Fine! I anticipate as enjoyable a visit there as in Aimedrat."

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: So far as enjoying our visit there, I give you no assurance of it. On the contrary, I anticipate a good deal of trouble—that Zu is a peculiar planet. However, I have promised to take you there and I shall arrange it."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Thank you. I shall not mind the trouble. But when are we to start?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Immediately. The day is gone in Niames. There is no use in staying longer in Sibbatmikah."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Just as you say—I am ready."

Attarokib led the way out of the park. As we passed through the crystal gate I was brought to a sharp halt at sight of the great change that had taken place in Niames since the morning.

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The brilliant light of daytime was now tinted faintly with a greenish-bluish shading of indescribable beauty. It was a color—one of many exotic hues I had occasion to see in Niames—not known on Earth. No painter has ever produced it by any chromatic mixture on his palette. For a few minutes I feasted my sight upon this evening light, speechless with amazement. The planets and stars too had undergone changes in their shading. They sparkled with a million-tinted brilliance, a fantastic display of color never imaged in my wildest-hued dreams. The scene was luminous as in daytime, but as if the light was beaming from worlds of prismatic gems instead of shining forth from a glaring central sun. It was a scene of betwitching gorgeousness reaching as far as sight extended, and of a softness in texture so pleasing that it made me think I had wandered into some enchanted polychromatic paradise.

Underneath was the comparatively dark ether ocean. Some miles away I could see the fringes of the saucerlike curtain of darkness that made the night black for one of our Earthly hemispheres. I saw golden beams of the moon plunging bravely through the murky curtain, piercing wide holes in the nitroxic ocean in which Earth swam swiftly.

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Let me disturb your dream, friend; it is time for us to fly to the planet Zu. There is ever so much to see. We shall hardly have time enough."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: But here is something I don't understand. Your night was short, yet your day does not seem to be longer. Can it be that I have spent so many more hours in the park of crystal than I thought?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Not at all. I had forgotten to inform you on the day and night matter. Let us fly, and in the meantime I will explain it. Here in Niames they are each of six Earthly hours. We have thus two days and two nights to your one. You will see later in many Niamesian lands why this arrangement is most convenient for us. It is necessary for the Aimedratians too."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Good, then. And I am very pleased with the beauty of your night. I wish it was as pleasant on Earth. By the way, shall we return again to the crystal park?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: It is not in my plans. Why do you ask?"

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: I was thinking that while there I should have taken a glance at the Earth as much as any other planet.” .

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: You have not missed much. Are you not already familiar enough with it?”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: I think that I would have seen it in a different light from the crystal park.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Quite true. However, you shall be compensated for it by your visit to the planet Zu, which you will certainly find most interesting.”

By now we had arrived again at the port of Niames. I was charmed by the added beauty which night gave to it. But my guide did not allow me much time to contemplate it.

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: You remember that I warned you the visit to Zu will have its troubles?

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Certainly—and I am prepared for anything. I am concerned only for you—because I am putting you to all that trouble.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: It is nothing, my friend, I am very glad to do it. But you do well to say you are ready for anything. Anything is likely to happen on that crazy planet, especially as we shall have to take some liberties with the bodies of a few of its inhabitants. However, let us go—everything possible is arranged. This time take hold of my girdle and hang on no matter what I do until I tell you to release it. Now, ready? We’re off!”

With these words the guide suddenly plunged right down into the nitroxic ocean and seized a white current that was waiting. I felt a sudden shock and the next instant, or the same instant—for it was in less than a hundredth of a second—felt myself upon solid ground. The thought of the guide came to me.

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: All right, my friend, you may release my girdle now. And collect your wits and look about you. This is Zu.”

CHAPTER SEVEN
THE PLANET ZU

My guide and I become brothers in crime—We are burned at the stake—I become wife and mother—Embarrassing hours—We turn tramps—We attempt to escape from work—The second attempt succeeds—Hunger drives us to become day-laborers—The riot—We are arrested—We flee from justice—The Conscienscious Pessimist—We arrive at the secret kingdom.

C1. What a difference from Niames! We seemed to be in a city of some sort, judging by the buildings about us, but they were as drab and ugly as they were massive. Not one structure on the street was distinguished by any degree of the beauty and color that I had found so delightful in the land we had just left. Moreover, the materials of which the things about me consisted, and even the atmosphere, were very crude in their makeup, so that seeing and hearing and the exercise of the other senses were greatly hampered.

The people who filled the streets and the houses were an additional source of surprise to me. Their bodies were crude, in no way translucent, and their forms mostly ugly and misshapen. Certainly they looked human, but a degenerate, diseased sort of humanity. And their behavior was at first hard to understand. The vast majority

were running wildly hither and thither, or riding in clumsy vehicles or on animals, some carrying heavy burdens on their backs. They were busy with something, but with what I could not tell. Their faces were anxious and cheerless—a sharp contrast to the happy, smiling faces of the people I had observed on the other planets from the crystal park.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: What sort of planet is this? Its gloom chills me through."

"It is not very Niamesian in character, plainly. We can go back if you desire. But do not direct your thoughts. Let them issue freely, for that is the custom of the planet."

"Very good," I replied. "But as for going back—no! Here I am, and here will stay, if you stay with me, until I have acquainted myself with this planet, though it turn out an unpleasant experience."

“Unpleasant experience is a very mild way of putting it. However, what would you like to do first?”

“I would like to ask a million questions. But I will wait. Take me where you think I will learn most about the life of the planet.”

“Grip your girdle and follow me into the window of the house you see there at the outskirts of the city. That’s just to begin with.”

I complied with my guide’s directions. A few seconds later we flew into what was evidently meant to be a handsomely furnished bedroom. Two young men lay outstretched upon separate beds, the noise of their snoring making a horrible dissonance.

“Now obey me carefully,” said Attarokib. “Take hold of your girdle with the right hand and put a finger of your left hand into the nose of that young man. And desire to occupy his body.”

Strange though the guide’s words were, I obeyed him instantly, and before I realized it I was enwrapt in a Zuman body. I found myself lying upon a bed, in the room we had entered by the window. A few steps away was a large mirror. I arose with the intention of seeing what I looked like in this remarkable disguise, but quickly grew aware of some new and surprising conditions to which I was subject.

First of all there was the feel and stench of the body. It made me seem to have been suddenly imprisoned in a clammy, reeking dungeon. During the first few minutes I found the smell of the body unbearable. And as if this were not enough, the walls of my dungeon seemed to lay right upon my shoulders and weigh down all my limbs. I shook off this feeling in a little while and soon adapted myself to both the odor and the weight. I compared my condition to my ownself before I had come to Nimikahara—and I realized that there was in fact a considerable likeness. But a third discomfort nearly drove me to a frenzy of straining in the beginning: I had lost my excellent eyesight. Everything in the room had become hazy since I was compelled to see it through the crude, and probably crippled, eyes of the person whose body I had borrowed. I could hardly see my ownself in the mirror until I stepped up right close to it.

The curious experience of finding myself suddenly again enwrapt in a physical body—and in a stranger’s body at that—had caused me to forget my guide for the while. Looking around, I saw a rather simple-faced red headed fellow staring at me out of the bed. I gazed upon him—rather

stupidly, I am afraid—at a loss for words, without notion of what I must do. The stranger, seeming to be satisfied with his examination of me, sat up at last and spoke.

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"What's the matter, Sepsafem, don't you recognize your friend Attarokib?"

Hearing these words, and without considering what I was doing, I burst out in uproarious laughter. While I was enjoying myself so hugely, and I was laughing at myself as at the erstwhile guide, the latter jumped out of the bed and, stumbling over his long white night-shirt, approached the mirror to examine himself. The sight of him doubled me up in a fresh paroxysm of laughter. Twice more I tried to look at him with a straight face, and each time I could not help renewing my ridiculous antics. It was so comical to see the once handsome princely Niamesian as a short, red-headed, bleary-eyed, simpleton in a night-shirt that I could not control my reactions, and thought I would go on laughing thus forever.

At last, almost exhausted, I threw myself upon a chair. He who claimed to be Attarokib seated himself upon the bed facing me. There was no strength left in me for laughing, so, unable to take my eyes from him, I merely smiled. In fact we smiled at one another. And after a while we both laughed. And then we grew calm. Not a word had passed since the guide spoke a few minutes earlier. Finally, seeing the first effects of the situation fading, he addressed me again.

"Well," said he, "how do you feel in your new garb?"

His words startled me. Not that there was anything extraordinary in his question—this was commonplace enough. But he had spoken in plain English—which fact had escaped me the first time I had heard him talk. I opened my mouth to reply, but no words came forth. Instead, as my mouth filled with its natural juices, a horrible nausea overcame me. I was aware that it was

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not my own saliva—yet I felt it, and it was as if someone had spat into my mouth. Giving up the attempt to answer my guide's query I began to empty my mouth of the saliva, reckless of the floor. But it was a futile task, since it kept filling again. I became so nauseous that my stomach began to work backwards, as in seasickness, and I vomited horribly.

This time it was the guide who laughed—rather heartlessly, I thought, but he was having his revenge—for I must have made a comical sight.

"Make up your mind for the worst," he said at last. "Try to disregard your discomfort, and speak."

These words recalled me to myself a little. Making an effort I found words at last to give expression to the imprisoned stream of my thoughts.

"Speak? Yes, I will speak. And first I will ask you how it is you speak English?"

"I was afraid it would be a harder question. Why not English? It is one of the most popular languages on this planet—and is used a great deal in this particular locality. Besides, what language would you prefer?"

"O, all right, English then. But you speak as if this were the Earth—and this room looks very much as if it were on Earth."

"We are on the planet Zu, which is what we call it in Niames, though right here the people differ about the proper name."

"You speak in riddles, Attarokib."

"Come, we will look about us, and you can judge the planet as you will. For the present see if some of the clothing scattered about fits you."

As I walked around the room the drowsiness I felt, together with the smell of my breath and my other feelings, convinced me that the man whose body I had borrowed

must have indulged in an excess of drinking the day before. With an effort I collected an outfit of clothing and donned them. The guide was doing likewise. One of my legs began to itch uncomfortably below the knee. I called the matter to Attarokib's attention.

"Why don't you scratch it?" said he.

"Why should I?" I retorted. "It's not my leg—why should I scratch some stranger's leg?"

"Suit yourself, my friend," the guide replied. "Don't scratch it. It's not your leg. But you are the one who feels the itching."

Realizing the common sense of his words, and that I could hardly wait for the owner to come and scratch his leg while I was using it, I rubbed it against a chair.

"Attarokib," I said again, "this blockhead of mine aches to split in two, and I've never had a headache before. It's terrible."

I expected to hear some good advice from my guide—perhaps a suggestion how to get rid of the pain. But he only shook his head sadly.

"The head I am wearing is just as painful to me, but we must bear it if we are to use these bodies."

"Then for Heaven's sake let's get out of here," I exclaimed. "I can't bear the stench any longer."

C2. Attarokib immediately opened the door, and I, too glad to escape from the filthy room, hastened to follow him out. We found ourselves in a short hallway that led us into a large room overlooking a garden. I was eager to approach the window, but found myself in the presence of a corpulent, elderly man, short in stature, who stared at the guide and myself with a great questionmark in his eyes. Not knowing what to say I greeted him with a simple "good-morning."

"Good morning, he says—he wishes me a calm good morning, after what happened last night!" the man exclaimed in tones of angry reproach. "O, the shame of it! The unbearable disgrace! I have nothing left but to kill myself! And you—both of you—come down bright and early looking as innocent as if you hadn't done a thing! What do you mean, eh? Tell me, what do you mean?"

My guide and I looked upon one another for a moment in dumb amazement. Then Attarokib, whose superior wit I was to see tested often during our busy day of adventures on the planet Zu, came to the rescue with a few well chosen words.

"You are right father," said he, guessing correctly at the relationship from the old gentleman's demeanor, "right as ever, and no question about that. But why not take into consideration for once our youth? Anybody is likely to make a mistake at our age."

This was meant to be a clever lead to draw out the facts of our crime from our so-called father. But though it served its purpose, it also put us in a worse condition.

"Young age, you say?" The old fellow squealed in a shrill, frenzied voice. "A mistake of youth, you say? Then it's true, and you are guilty! You confess it! And last night you swore it was two other fellows! And you call it a mistake! A mistake for which you will both swing on the gallows! Oh!

Oh! To think my children could go so far! Assault a young girl and then kill her!

"Ten years I have stood for your knavery," he continued in a lower voice that only showed his rage the better, "ten years I have been paying to keep you out of prison, to hush up your scandalous behavior, to spare my good name. But this shameful thing is too much

You have killed me now, and it will mean your end too. People have thought me rich, lucky, happy—they have not known what a hell you two have made this life for me. But it will all out now. And I am through with you. Go! Get out and take care of yourselves from now on! Let them not find you in my house! There's the door! You are dead to me, dead, dead!"

As he shouted his voice had risen again to a shrill soprano that cracked piteously with his last words. His anger, probably inflamed by our guiltless countenances, was terrible to behold. He was bound either to attack us in a moment or burst a blood-vessel. We therefore did the only thing we could —we left through the door at which he was pointing and went out into the garden. The air was damp and chilly, but there could be no thought of returning for a coat, so we made our way to a high and thick gate. Here we grew aware of a tumultuous noise on the other side, and we judged that a crowd was trying to break through. Not thinking, or perhaps not caring, about the possible consequences, Attarokib removed the heavy bar. The gate burst open, and in a moment we were no longer our own masters.

The mob fell upon us with frenzied impetus. A score of hands seized me. Cuffs and kicks rained upon me from all sides. I tried to defend myself, but the odds were too great. I lost consciousness at last.

When I regained my senses I was aware of lying prone on the bottom of a moving vehicle. Someone was sitting upon my chest. I heard voices. "Put up a fight he did, the younger one."—"First time he ever showed any manhood."—"Nearly broke my nose, and I'd like to kick him in the belly for it." The last remark was followed by suitable action, so that I lost consciousness again, recovering intermittently to feel frightful pains all over

my body, with the blood oozing from a dozen wounds. The agony seemed to last for years, though it was probably only minutes. Finally I felt that

tongues of flame were searing my body, roasting me alive. The agony increased a millionfold, but not for long. Suddenly I heard the clear voice of the guide.

"Well, there we are, friend Sepsafem. Free at last."

The pain had vanished completely, though I was yet in a state of extreme fright. I stood again in my ego state, Attarokib at my side. We were in an open glade of a forest. A mass of flushed and excited people stood around a huge blaze where, to my horror, I saw my late body, and the guide's, rapidly charring.

"Good Heavens! Attarokib," I exclaimed, "Have we been the cause of the death of those poor wretches?"

"Don't concern yourself in the least. The mob was bound to get them anyway, and we have done them a favor, for which they will never be able to repay us, by taking all they would have suffered upon ourselves."

"What a Hellish planet this is!"

"Did you mention Hell?" the guide said suddenly. "Well, you remember that we discussed the fact that this planet is variously named in different places. Hell is one of its names, at least in your language."

"Do you mean to say that this is Hell?" I exclaimed in great excitement.

"I know it by the name of Zu," Attarokib replied, "so let us call it that, which is more correct, since it is not the kind of Hell to which you apply that name."

"It is certainly not that kind of Hell in so far as the houses, and the people, and the organization of family life that I have seen, are concerned. These are rather quite like Earth. And though now, without that

body, I see many things here which I did not know on Earth, in that body I would have sworn it is Earth. However, we are not in England, despite the fact that the people speak our language. Yet this might be America, for all I know. But in so far as what we have gone through is concerned, Hell seems to me as appropriate a name as any other."

"Well, now that I have almost convinced you," said the guide with one of his genial smiles, "would you like to continue examining Zu as you are now, or in a Zuman body?"

"I see things so differently in the two conditions that I would like to continue for the present in the body. I do not like however, to subject you again to that unpleasant experience."

“Never mind that. To tell you the truth, I find it rather interesting to go through all this again, after so many years.”

“Again? Do you mean to tell me that you have been here—as one of these people—before?”

“Certainly!” the guide declared very simply, as if it was a slight thing to confess that one had been in Hell!

“But, my dear Attarokib, whatever could you have done to deserve—er, pardon me. I am afraid I am asking something too personal.”

“Not at all. I didn’t do a thing to deserve the privilege of being granted a term upon Zu. It was a favor.”

“You quite amaze me!”

“No doubt. That’s because you have the wrong idea about Hell. All these people did not come here originally as a punishment for things they did. But you will learn about it later on. Let us go and borrow a couple of bodies before all the people in this vicinity

wake up. I want to stay around here so that you will understand the local language.”

“Just as you say, good Attarokib. But—er—don’t you see—I—”

“You wouldn’t care to be burned at the stake again?”

“Exactly! You understand me, as usual. The fact is, I feel that being murdered once is enough for one day.”

“Your words drip with wisdom, my friend—it is a saying of the old poets—and I will try to get us a couple of bodies with a less atrocious history, this time.”

“Good. I am glad to leave this place. It’s horrible to see the joyous behavior of this mob after their execution of two youths—however guilty they may have been. At that, I wonder what they would think if they knew that they did not torture and kill the ones they were after—that they got two other fellows?”

“Fortunately for their peace of mind, we could not. convince them if we tried. And you remind me that we were supposed to have declared last night to our late father that “it was two other fellows” that did the filthy work for which we have now died. Who can tell? I have a suggestion. Let us hasten to our late home and see if we can pick up the threads of this story there.”

We were back in a few moments at the house, but we learned very little. The father, his hair turned snowy white, was running wildly back and forth

over the house. His eyes, protruding far out of their sockets, told us that he was probably stark mad. Two strong men were trying to overpower him and tie him up with a rope. He escaped repeatedly from their grasp and ran around breaking windows, vases, pictures, and tearing bunches of hair out of his head. We left the sickening scene.

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C3. A few streets away we took possession of two sleeping bodies. I found myself again in a very strange position—I was Attarokib's wife.

It was easier this time to accustom ourselves to our bodies. Besides, our discomfort was partially compensated for by the amusement we felt in our new relationship.

"Sepsafem—my charge, my friend, my brother, and my wife—" said the guide, who was inclined to make the most of every situation, "I like you more and more with each promotion. I can see you were not a bad looking girl when you were younger. I hope now that you aren't going to be a nag. If you disappoint me I shall positively desert you. You know I am not legally married to you!"

"I'll try to be a good and dutiful wife," I assured him, "but you must give me time to learn. And, bantering aside, do you realize that we are probably the heads of a family, that we don't know our names, our children, if any, or our past?"

"All of which remains to be learned. And now, whatever happens, I shall not confess a thing. But suppose we go and meet the family—if any, as you say."

"O, my dear!" said I, laughing at the soprano sounds that came from my throat, "we can't go down before we dress—and my hair is not done!"

We managed to get our clothing on at last, but I had great difficulty with many unfamiliar items. My hair, however, was a grave problem. Try as I would I could not manage it. Attarokib, taking pity at last, tied them up in a ridiculous double knot; and, gazing shamefacedly upon his handiwork, he forgave me for declaring that he was a better guide than hairdresser. After a final dejected glance at my appearance in the mirror,

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I cast discretion to the winds and followed Attarokib out of the room.

Walking as stealthily as we could through the house, we discovered several bedrooms occupied. My worst fears were realized. I was a mother

many times. In one of the bedrooms we interrupted two little girls in a game of hurling pillows at one another. Before I had time to utter an appropriate reproof one of them cried out—"See how funny ma has made up her hair!"—and they both burst into gleeful laughter. I banged the door shut and fled.

In the dining room we found a maid who stared at me, and tried to control her giggling, and finally asked what we wanted for breakfast.

"First of all," I replied, "you'll have to come upstairs with me and do my hair. My shoulders are very painful and I can't raise my hands. Then, for breakfast, we'll have the same thing as yesterday."

"Madame is mistaken, eh?" said the girl. "We didn't eat till after the funeral yesterday, and had no breakfast at all."

"True, true," said I, as we walked up the stairs, "the funeral has so upset me I don't know what's what. I meant what we had the day before."

We were in the bedroom by now, and the girl, working over my hair, kept up a steady stream of chatter.

"Madame surprises me today, being so upset. Yesterday you said you were glad the poor girl was gone, as there was no use for such a born cripple to go on living and making everybody miserable. You didn't even cry at the funeral. And Madame surprises me to have made up with my master after your quarrel last night when you said you would never speak to him again

I thought you were going to leave him today. But me, I am glad it is well again today."

"Yes, my dear," I replied, "such is life—full of surprises. You have no notion how all these things surprise me."

"What does Madame mean?"

"Never mind. I'll tell you about it later."

This, my hair being handsomely arranged, ended the conversation, much to my relief. We went below, where I found Attarokib in the midst of a scene that nearly roused me to laughter.

Half of the family were up already, and trying to speak to their father. But he had tied a great cloth over both cheeks and was moaning "O, my tooth! O, my tooth!" and refusing to answer questions on that account. I envied him his toothache, and wished I had thought of something as convincing to make it unnecessary for me to speak. Then, approaching him

as if to console him for his pain, I whispered into his ear that we had buried a crippled girl yesterday, and were not sorry for it, and had quarreled last night and gone to bed not on speaking terms.

"Do you know our names, or who or what we are?" he asked.

"No, not yet"—then, loudly—"O, your poor toothache, I wish I had it instead."

A pretty girl of about twenty years came running to me and, with many embraces and kisses declared she was happy to see that I had been reconciled with Pa.

The two little girls entered, followed by a younger boy, and a young man of perhaps twenty-five. There was a host of questions from the children. "Ma, what shall I put on?" and "Ma, can I have jam today?" and "Who will do this?" and "What shall I tell the baker?"

—all so confusing that, for want of a better defence, I proceeded to develope the pain in my shoulders.

Breakfast was one horror after another. The food, which the family relished, was obnoxious to me. Attarokib's toothache served him nobly here, but I was compelled to make a pretence of eating. The meal was finished at last, and the children dispatched I knew not where. Nor did I care. Only the two oldest children remained with us. But the ordeal was by no means over. Servants came in to bother me with a dozen affairs about which I had no knowledge. In the midst of it all visitors arrived, a lady and her husband. The latter bowed to me and walked over to Attarokib whilst the lady embraced me affectionately and said many sweet things. Whether she was my sister, my sister-in-law, or my friend I had no way of knowing, and because she said nothing to inform me on this score I would have wished her in Hades if it had not occurred to me that in fact she was already there.

Little by little it became clear that they were our best friends who had just come to town, and, hearing about yesterday's funeral, hastened over to comfort us in our mourning. Naturally most of the talking fell to the visitors. And I was amazed to see how much gossip my friend had picked up during the few hours that she was in town.

“Have you heard about the orange-skin-magnate?” she asked. “What? You haven’t? Why, it’s all over town. His two sons were burned to death this morning by a mob. They were supposed to have assaulted and killed a girl, and her family had their revenge. Poor man—’tis said they’re going to put him in an insane asylum—and he has always been so fortunate!”

Attarokib and I gave no hint of the prominent part we had taken in that horrible affair.

“And have you heard about the leading manuremagnate?” she continued. “No? Where have you been keeping yourself? Why he’s going to divorce his wife. They have no children, you know, and life is a tragedy for those two.”

“That may be as it is,” her husband put in, “but for them life has its compensations. Look at the warehouses full of manure he owns! Here I have been slaving and ruining my health for years and I don’t half equal his wealth.”

“But we have at least our children—and he would give all his manure if his wife would have a child.”

“So we have children, and has that made us happy? Both of them are always sick with one thing after another, and we are nervous wrecks with taking care of them.”

“You are right at that,” the wife conceded. “But we are not the only ones. Take our friends here—for ten years they have gone through hell with a crippled and half-witted child, and now they have had to bury her. However, perhaps they will have peace now.”

“Yes, indeed,” I rejoined, feeling myself on safe ground for the moment. “From now on our quarrels and troubles are over. It was the child that made us so nervous that we were always quarreling.”

“By the way,” said our male visitor to Attarokib, “your friend the quilt-magnate has gone to have himself cut up again. That’s the sixth time in the last five years. There will be nothing left of him soon.”

“Poor man!” his wife remarked.

“Served him right!” her husband replied. “He let himself be frightened by his workers into promising them more leisure, with the result that my workers came

and forced me to make the same promise! I give them food enough to last them twenty-four hours, for which, you know, they only work twelve hours —and they want yet more leisure! And who knows? Before long we may have to keep our promises!"

Attarokib grumbled forth something that seemed to his friend an agreement with his sentiments.

"I had nearly forgotten to tell you," continued my friend, who had not stopped her chatter while the men discussed business, "about that disgusting egg-shell-magnate. His wife has left him at last! We were looking forward to it. He is such a miser! Lives on a few crusts a day and expects his wife to do likewise! She hasn't had a new dress since they were married!"

"Isn't it too miserable!" I exclaimed.

"Still, if I were in her place I would have stayed on," my friend continued. "He's bound to starve himself to death within another year or two, and then, heigh-ho! Think of it—he's the richest man in this city! I wish we had his egg-shells! I don't see how such people get all the luck!"

To this unexpected burst of envy I was about to rejoin with a doubting remark when I heard Attarokib speaking—his toothache apparently relieved for the moment.

"But don't you think," he was saying to his friend, "that on the whole our workers are rather justified in their discontentment?"

"What are you saying? I am surprised to hear you. You did not speak so last month. Then you thought them very fortunate. But that must be because you have been relieved of a great trouble and will probably be quite happy henceforth. As for me, nothing ever happens to lighten the burden of my woes. I feel that I would gladly

change places with my humblest servant if I could have his health or his peace. Why, my workers lead a Heavenly life, with nothing to worry about except obtaining work and food. And if they go hungry it's chiefly their own fault. If they would work more hours a day I would increase their rations gladly. But look at me! I have to watch a fool grow twice as rich as I in my own line of business! How I bear up under it I don't know. Sometimes I suspect he must be overworking his servants to get rich. But I haven't the heart to drive them so. Yes, if I had my choice I would like to be a simple workzumn. They have it easy."

“Is it possible,” I exclaimed, addressing the lady, “that you, my friend, should be envious of a miser who hasn’t the sense to live properly with all his great wealth, and that your husband should envy his own hired workers?”

“Yes, brother Sepsafem, for such is Hell!” replied Attarokib, instead of my friend.

“What did you say?” asked our visitors in unison, the cause of their amazement being a great embarrassment to my guide.

“It is a saying of the old poets,” I remarked, to explain what Attarokib had said.

“You have taken the words out of my mouth,” declared the guide with a gesture of thanks.

Our guests tried to prolong the visit, but Attarokib and I were suddenly taken again with our ills, so that our friends soon excused themselves.

“Good-by, my dear,” were my friend’s parting words. “You are very lucky. You live in such peace with your family, and your only burden has been lifted from you now. How I envy you! You and your husband are the happiest couple in the whole land!”

“Well! Well! Well!” exclaimed my guide when we found ourselves alone at last. “Congratulations, O happiest lady in the land!”

“A pest on such happiness!” I replied almost in anger. “My feet are aching, the veins are frightfully swollen, and the sooner you get me out of this body the better. Moreover, you don’t look too handsome yourself with that ridiculous sheet around your face. I think I’d rather have you for a guide than a husband.”

“If you were a real lady, you know,” Attarokib replied as we walked upstairs, “that would be very faint praise. However, I can return part of the compliment. I wouldn’t have you for a wife as a gift.”

“That makes it quite mutual,” I said as we reentered the bedroom, “so let’s not get married. Instead tell me how to get out of this.”

“The method is simple. Press your hands very tightly over your hips—where the girdle is, and desire to rise out of the body. But first lie down upon the bed.”

Both of us did just that, and immediately found ourselves with our heads touching the ceiling. We had a glimpse of the egoes of the real master and mistress of the house disappearing into their bodies, and the next moment

they were awake. They looked wonderingly upon one another for perhaps a minute. The man was first to jump out of bed. He ran instantly downstairs into the dining room, followed by his wife and by Attarokib and myself. The room was occupied only by the young man with whom we had breakfasted. To him the recently awakened master turned with words of anger and accusation.

"Who was it that dressed me up in my sleep, and why was I left to sleep so late? What conspiracy is

this? Somebody must have drugged me last night! Explain this devilish thing or I'll turn you out!"

"Why, father!" the young man exclaimed in great amazement. "What are you talking about? You got up two hours ago and dressed yourself and have been downstairs, and you just went upstairs with mother a few minutes ago!"

"Who just went upstairs?" the irate parent roared. "Are you crazy? Are you trying to make a fool out of me?"

His shouting brought the young woman and the maid in and a scene of comical confusion ensued. The maid and the children told all that had been done that morning, including the entertainment of the guests, and how they had all been glad that pa and ma had composed their quarrel of the night before. Hearing this the mistress of the house raised her shrill voice in protest and declared the whole thing was a lie, and the proof of it was that after last night's quarrel she never intended to speak to her wretch of a husband again and she hadn't changed her mind and still had no intention of ever making up with him. Then the children reminded the father of his toothache.

"You lie! You lie!" he cried. "I had no toothache and—"

"He had a toothache?" his wife said in a tone of great contempt. "He had a toothache? This is too much!" And she burst into mocking laughter. Then again, "He had a toothache! O, if you knew how impossible that is!"

"Of course it's impossible!" the husband repeated. "Impossible! And I'll tell you why. Yes, I'll show you why, though it's nobody's business. I've kept it a secret

—it's my private affair—but to prove to you what liars you are, I'll show you. Here, see!"

And he pulled out a complete double set of false teeth from his mouth, which he held open, revealing that it was devoid of a single genuine molar! I looked at Attarokib—and what a sheepish grin there was upon his features!

We stayed ten minutes longer there, listening to a thousand recriminations and accusations that passed between "the happiest couple in the land" and their poor children. The latter suggested that their parents must have been sleep-walking, but as this was a weak solution it did little good. When we had heard enough of the ridiculous scene, we departed by way of an open window. As we were leaving we heard husband and wife both bewailing the fact that since the hour they were married they had never known a single day of peace and happiness on account of their disappointment in one another.

"I am glad to have gotten out of that so well," said Attarokib.

"Amen to that," I replied. "You know you had a narrow escape."

"You mean about the teeth? Certainly. But how was I to know? It's a good thing he had the delicacy to conceal the fact that he used false teeth from his friends and children. Well, what now?"

"If your intention was to disgust me with this planet, you have succeeded. So far I haven't seen or heard about a happy or contented person in it."

"Such is Hell, brother Sepsafem."

"But is it all like this? Isn't there another side you could show me?"

"Certainly. Haven't you heard that the working people are the happy ones?"

"Yes, I remember. They work only twelve hours a day for food that lasts them twenty-four."

"Right. Now would you like a taste of such great happiness?"

"Delighted, if it doesn't last too long."

"Most respectable working people have been at their duties for a few hours. But there is a class among which we may find a pair of late sleepers whose bodies we can borrow for a few hours."

C4. Following his last words the guide took me to a squalid section of the city and we flew into a room in a large building that had the appearance of a very cheap hotel. In a narrow single bed with dirty linen two unkempt looking fellows were snoring in harmony. We repeated the process of entering their bodies. The first thing I did was to leap out of the filthy bed. Attarokib was right behind me.

"And now, Sepsafem," said my guide, "we are members of the class of happy workzumns."

"Judging from the appearance of our bodies, and from the clothing on those chairs, I suspect we have no particular love for work," I remarked.

"However that may be, dress and let us go down."

There was no difficulty in differentiating between our clothing, since I was a great deal taller and huskier than Attarokib, though he was of no slight size either. It was repugnant to put on the shabby, tattered, vermininfested clothing, but Attarokib consoled me with the thought that I was not putting them upon my own body.

As we walked down through a dirty passage-way I began to feel hungry.

"Do you think," I remarked, "that these fellows have had anything to eat lately?"

"So you also are hungry?" was my guide's reply. "Well, search through your pockets and see if you can find anything. Mine are empty of valuables and full of holes."

I emptied my pockets of some string, a spoon, several buttons, a dirty rag that might have been a kerchief, and a flask containing a few drops of liquor.

"Not much value," said Attarokib. "We'll probably have to earn some food. But here we are in the lobby. I hope we paid for our beds so that we'll be free to leave."

"You fellows sober already?" a clerk behind the desk shouted across the room.

We murmured something and kept walking towards the door.

"Hey! Where you going?" shouted the clerk. "How about that coal?"

We approached nearer the desk.

"Yes, it is rather cold!" replied Attarokib innocently-

"Is it?" said the clerk. "I didn't know you were hard of hearing. But if you're cold, go out in the yard and shovel that coal into the cellar. That will

warm you up. Do you think I'm letting you tramps sleep here till noon for nothing? Go on, get to work. The idea of trying to sneak out!"

"No—yes! Surely, we'll do it," replied Attarokib. "But won't you give us something to eat first? We're rather hungry, you know."

"Say, who's supposed to feed you? Isn't it enough I give you a bed for the few wagons of coal you shovel?

And what's got into you—talking so pretty? Are you still drunk?"

"No, not exactly drunk," Attarokib assured him. "But we're not ourselves this morning."

The clerk, who thought he understood the last remark, thereupon called in a chief workzumn, whom he instructed to put us to work. We were soon sweating, despite the bitter cold of the air, with our labor. I thought the great pile of coal would never diminish.

"Attarokib," I said, between heaves, "I was not made for a coal-shoveler—certainly not for a hungry one. This will take hours, yet, and there's no food at the end of it. Can't we leave it?"

"Not a very honest thought, that," replied my guide. "Remember that we are paying for our bed. However, I think we've done enough for it, so if you see our supervisor not watching let's make a run for freedom. No, don't wait—now is the time. Come, over that fence."

We dropped our shovels and ran. A leap and a scramble took us over the fence. By this time our supervisor was aware of our escape and scrambled atop the fence where he sat shouting for us to stop. Just as we neared the corner an official in a green uniform with big brass buttons and swinging a vicious looking wooden club in his hand turned in from the crossing. In the twinkling of an eye he had us in his hands.

"Ye would rob people in open daylight, would ye?" he cried indignantly, the while belaboring us with his club. "I'll teach ye to be honest, law-abiding Zumen!" And he administered the lesson earnestly and with vigor, literally beating it into our heads, and so freely that some of the instruction fell upon our shoulders.

By this time our supervisor, with the clerk who had been summoned by the former's shouting, joined our

tutor with their fists. We took a sound thrashing, though not without returning many a blow. Finally we were subdued.

"And what have they been stealing?" the Professor of Honesty inquired.

"They haven't stolen anything," our supervisor informed him. "They are only trying to run away from doing the work they owe us."

"So that's it, eh?" said the instructor in law-abiding Zumanship, "trying to escape from their bounden work, eh?" And he clubbed us anew for this offense. Then he paused. "But say, I can arrest them anyway. You can complain they were stealing your coal—there's enough coal-dust on them to prove it."

"No, I don't want them arrested," said the clerk. "I'd rather they finished the work."

"Well, there you are!" said the teacher of honorable behavior. "A man doesn't get a chance to perform his duties. And they complain at Headquarters that I don't make enough arrests at my post!"

The clerk consoled him for his troubles with a few whispered words and a friendly handshake. Our super visor led us back into the coal yard with many kicks and cuffs, and soon, despite hunger, fatigue, and pain, we were at work again. But not for long. The moment his back was turned Attarokib and I leaped upon him. While the guide stifled his outcries, I pinned his hands behind his back. We dragged him into a cellar, tied him up and gagged him, and then leisurely walked out.

No longer fearing pursuit, we did not climb over the fence until we had made sure no one was in sight. Then we walked rapidly into the next street, and kept turning comers until we had lost ourselves.

"That was terrible, Attarokib, terrible!" I exclaimed.

"Such is Hell, brother Sepsafem!" was his reply.

"Our bodies are hungry," I said, "either we must feed them or abandon them."

Just then we saw a great crowd of people running all in one direction, their manner eager and excited, as if in pursuit of someone or something. Wondering what might be afoot, we joined the throng. In a few minutes we arrived at a magnate's courtyard where a strange scene was taking place.

A large table was set, creaking under the weight of many dishes out of which a company of people was dining heartily. At the head of the table sat the master of the family, leading the gluttonous feast. The diners were

surrounded by a mob of workers and their families, who looked to be as tired and famished as myself. Every now and then the people at the table would throw bones, crusts of bread, remnants of vegetables, over their shoulders. The hungry mob behind them scrambled to seize upon these cast-off morsels, devouring all they laid hands upon.

The crowd of which Attarokib and I were a part tried to join the privileged people around the diners, but was not permitted by those in the first group to do so. We stood nearby gazing enviously at those who were lucky enough to be in favor.

After the repast those who had eaten the leavings went to work at filling boxes with nutshells and storing them in great warehouses nearby. The master of the establishment, rising from the table, glanced appraisingly at the crowd of strangers who were still standing around. From their midst he selected a dozen men, the largest and strongest-looking, and put them to work with his

men, promising them a share of the leavings of the evening meal. Attarokib and I were among the lucky ones to be thus chosen.

Though less arduous than shoveling coal, I found the new work just as fatiguing, especially as it was unbearably boresome. I picked up the shells of hazel nuts from a huge pile and, counting them one by one, dropped them into a square box. When I would have a hundred thousand shells I must carry the box into the warehouse.

An hour of this nearly drove me insane. I bore it only because an idea came to me that freed me from the most intolerable part of the work—the monotonous counting. I heard Attarokib, who was working on almond shells, counting rhythmically.

“Nine thousand four hundred and sixty-one,” and be dropped a shell. “Nine thousand four hundred and sixty-two,” and he dropped a shell. And so on and on. I worked a little faster for a few minutes until I had reached his number. After that I counted no longer, but each time that Attarokib dropped an almond shell into his box I dropped a hazel shell into mine. By the time we got to twenty-seven thousand I could drop shells automatically at Attarokib’s pace, and at any time I wished I could pick up his number and be right! I was free, then, to observe what was going on around me, and I wondered where from in Heaven such a blessed idea had come to me in Hell!

Before long I made a fresh discovery. Most of the men were careless with the count. When the superintendent of the counters was not looking they spoke to one another in whispers. I noticed that a few of the workers who kept counting all the time were held in contempt by their fellows. I was to learn shortly that they were hated.

"Say, fellow," one of my neighbors, a huge brutal looking man, said to me, speaking between his teeth, "are you a foreigner?"

"Yes," I replied—then, seeing how surprised he was—"I mean no. I'm a native."

"And you?" asked my neighbor of Attarokib.

The latter indicated by numerous signs that he could not interrupt his counting to discuss the matter.

"Must be a foreigner, that tramp," declared my neighbor, addressing me again. "Listen, col, we pure natives don't want none of those foreigners around. We're gonna kick 'em out. When you hear me whistle, you jump on that one and beat him up. You'll have plenty of help."

The signal came in a few minutes, before I had had a chance to warn Attarokib. But he was not caught asleep. He had counted and at the same time watched the demeanor of the men. Attarokib, with some ten others, was surrounded, and attacked by more than one hundred. I, who was supposed to be with the aggressors, found myself soon outside the melee. I felt that I had to join my friend. I therefore picked up a thick cudgel and began to lay about me. In five minutes I had knocked a dozen men unconscious. But I was marked now as an enemy of the majority. Ten men were upon me, when the fight was interrupted by the arrival of a company of green-uniformed guardians. One by one they picked off the fighters, administering a generous clubbing to each, and loaded them into wagons. When the same lot was meted out to me, I was delighted to see Attarokib mount the wagon right behind me.

"Are you hurt?" I asked him.

"Who, I? No. As soon as they made for me I crawled into a mountain of nutshells and waited. I was

struck only by the rescuers. But you seem to have come out badly-—you are bleeding. I thought you were playing the role of native? How did you

get hurt?"

"I was trying to rescue you."

"Thanks, thanks very much, I'll do as much for you, next time."

"Next time? Aren't we going to have any peace at all?"

"Such is Hell, brother Sepsafem!"

C5. The wagon stopped. We were hustled into a huge stone building, which I recognized as a courthouse. The court was packed with people waiting trial, while one case was in process. Our guards seated us in the rear of the court. I tried hard to hear what the trial was about, but judge, witness, and counsel mumbled so that I learned nothing.

"You were one of those who defended the foreigners?" I heard a voice, speaking English with an unfamiliar accent, at my ear.

The speaker was one of the workingmen who had been attacked. I acknowledged my role.

"You were very foolish to help us," the man continued.

"How can you say so?" I asked in amazement.

"You will soon find out. Now they will throw the whole blame for the riot upon you. They will say you were the first to attack us."

"Impossible!" I declared confidently. "You will bear witness that I defended the attacked against the aggressors, and so will half a dozen others."

"You speak as if you had never been in ow courts before. They will not count what we say. It will be arranged against you because you are a meddler. They

will perhaps hang you, as an example of how the courts preserve order and punish rioters."

"Really, this is ridiculous. A court cannot go against such positive evidence as I have in my favor and decide against all the well-established facts."

"You speak like one who does not know the courts. There is no justice in them, only much law. The best thing for you is to escape, if you can."

"Thank you for warning me, but I will stay here. Law and justice both will uphold me."

A court officer took us in hand now and moved us to the front of the court. Evidently the time of our examination was approaching. Being so

close to the seat of justice I was able to hear what was going on. I saw an accused robber brought forward. He was charged with stealing seventy goblets from the strong-box of a magnate. The latter, first witness, was questioned by the judge.

The Judge: On the day in question, what happened, if anything?

The accuser-magnate: My neighbor came into my house and said, what's the matter with your servants? Strangers who want to see you say they are afraid to go into your house—

A man in a frock: Your honor, I am the defendant's Defender, and I object and wish to have disregarded the accuser's last words and rejected as evidence.

The Judge: The wish is granted. What happened?

The accuser: My neighbor said, somebody wants to talk to you in my house—

The Defender: I object and wish it disregarded.

The Judge: Wish granted. What happened?

The accuser: I was called to speak to someone in my neighbor's house—

The Defender: I wish it disregarded.

The Judge: Wish granted. Did you go next door?

The accuser: Yes, and seeing the stranger who wished to speak with me —

The Judge: You left your house. Was anybody watching it?

The accuser: I didn't leave anybody to watch it—

The Judge: What happened after that?

The accuser: I went in and my neighbor's brother went out to watch my house—

The Defender: Object and wish to have disregarded the last words.

The Judge: Granted. What happened?

The accuser: I spoke to the stranger and my neighbor's brother went out to watch my house—

The Defender: Object and wish—

The Judge: Granted. What happened?

The accuser: I spoke and the stranger said—

The Defender: Object and—

The Judge: Granted. What happened?

The accuser: What's the use? Every time I start to tell what happened that man asks that it should be disregarded and your honor allows it.

The Defender: Ob—

The Judge:' Granted. Answer my questions. What did you do after you were finished speaking with the stranger?

The accuser: The stranger tried to detain me—

The Defender: Wish—

The Judge: Granted. Now listen, accuser, you are not familiar with the laws, are you?

The accuser: No.

The Judge: Then don't be surprised if a few of your unimportant words must be disregarded at request

of the defendant's Defender. The laws must be observed. Now tell me what happened.

The accuser: I finally left my neighbor's home—

The Defender:—

The Judge: Granted. Tell what happened.

The accuser: I went into my house and saw my strong-box empty and I shouted "I've been robbed!"

The Defender: Wish to disregard last three words.

The Judge: Disregarded. And then?

The accuser: I ran out and saw a crowd running, and the man who had gone to watch my house said—

The Defender: Wish to disregard what he said.

The Judge: Wish granted. And what happened?

The accuser: That's all.

The Judge: Did you see the defendant?

The accuser: Not until the Guardian had him.

The Judge: Did you see him?

The accuser: Yes—

The Defender: I ob—

The Judge: Granted. Did you see the defendant rob you of your goblets?

The accuser: No.

The Judge: Cross examination by defendant's Defender is now in order.

The Defender: When you came back, you found some goblets in your strong-box?

The accuser: No.

The Defender: You mean to say you didn't find a single goblet even?

The Judge: What's the difference how many he didn't find? There's no evidence the defendant stole them, is there?

The accuser: I have a witness.

The Judge: Where is he?

A witness came forward and took an oath.

The Judge: What do you know about this?

The Witness: I saw this man come in my brother's house to speak with the stranger, and being suspicious that something was wrong I said I would go out and watch over my brother's neighbor's house—

The Defender: Wish it all disregarded.

The Judge: Wish granted. What do you know?

The Witness: I went out and looked into the window of the man's house and saw this defendant pushing the cover of the strong-box shut and a bunch of goblets in his hand.

The Defender; Wish it dis—

The Judge: Disregarded. You didn't see the defendant take the goblets out of the strong-box?

The Witness: No, but I thought he was robbing—

The Defender: Ob—

The Judge: Granted. What happened?

The Witness: So I shouted "Stop Thief!"

The Defender: Wish—

The Judge: Granted. What do you know?

The Witness: The defendant ran out of the house, and a crowd chased after him until that Guardian captured him—

The Defendant: Wish—

The Judge: Granted. Guardian, do you know of anyone who saw the defendant take the goblets out of the strong-box?

The Guardian: No, your honor, but the defendant confessed, when I caught him, in the presence of witnesses, and the goblets—

The Defender: Your honor I—

The Judge: Granted. There being no evidence that the defendant stole the goblets, I declare him free.

As the prisoner walked out proudly in the company of his befrocked Defender, the accused turned with a wail to the Judge.

"Is there no justice?"' he cried. "Must I lose my seventy precious goblets?"

Who says there is no justice?" cried the judge. "To prove to you that there is, I order the seventy goblets which the Guardian found upon the recent defendant restored to you!"

"O, thank you, your honor!" said the delighted man.

And what is more, to uphold the honor of our courts, whose reputation you have contemptuously besmirched by suggesting there is no justice in them, I fine you one-hundred goblets!"

When I saw the defendant freed, and the procedure by which it was done, I had begun to doubt that I would come out well in this court. But when the judge ordered the goblets, which had been found in possession of the accused thief, given to the accuser, though deciding there was no proof that he had been robbed, it was too much for me. I turned to Attarokib.

"My friend, I am afraid you will have to do some of your best thinking now."

"The very best, if you wish. But to what purpose?"

"To save me from hanging."

"Eh? Who says you are going to hang?"

I told Attarokib of my neighbors warning. "I did not believe him, of course," I concluded, "but having witnessed this trial, I can already visualize myself swinging on the gallows."

"There seems to be a fair prospect of it." said Attarokib phlegmatically. "I can just see the picture.

Your nose, which is rather pinkish, will probably turn purple for lack of breath. You will try to keep your legs together, for, if they swing apart, you will make a ludicrous appearance. I will probably get a chance to cut you down during the night, so it will not last very long, you see."

"Attarokib—what are you saying? You surely aren't going to let them hang me?"

"Such is Hell, brother Sepsafem!"

"To Hell with Hell! I know how to escape it!"

"How wise you are grown! How? Tell me!"

"I'll put my hand on my hips and wish myself out of this body!"

“Marvelous! Marvelous! And then, when this fellow’s ego returns to his body, they will hang him.”

“True, true, I can’t escape that way. But how then? If they hang me in his body, he’ll be dead just the same, though he’ll have escaped the agony and public shame.”

“Then we must escape. There is the window. We’ll jump right through. Don’t stop if you are cut up. We’ll run to the right and keep running until we can hide in some cellar.”

“Good. But wait till I tell my neighbor here, perhaps he also wishes to escape.”

But the man who had warned me stated that for him the risk was too great, since his punishment would not be worse than a few years at hard labor in a prison.

Attarokib and I waited while the first witnesses of the riot were called. They established that some big fellow looking like a tramp had begun it all. Would they be able to identify him if he was produced? Certainly!

This was enough for us. We leaped over several benches, up to an alcove, and breaking some panes of

glass with our elbows, jumped into the street and ran as fast as our legs could carry us. We had a start of a few minutes over our pursuers, for it was long before anyone in the courtroom could realize what had happened, so fast were our movements. We were never in danger of being caught, but to make sure of our safety we hid in two empty waste barrels standing in a deserted alley, pulling the covers over us.

C6. In this rather cramped position I stayed several hours, waiting for Attarokib to call me. We had agreed that he would rap three times upon the side of the barrel as a signal. Suddenly I felt that the cover of my shelter was being lifted. I looked up in terror, expecting to see a green uniform. Instead I saw a pair of watery eyes blinking at me from a worn face that was only partially hidden by a gray beard.

This was no one to be afraid of, so I stood up, noticing at the same time that the day was disappearing.

“Say, what are you hiding in there for?” the old man asked.

“And what are you looking for?” I retorted.

“Why, for a crust, of course! And I find you! Well, talking won’t satisfy my hunger.” And he uncovered the next barrel. Attarokib came leaping out.

“What is this, what is this?” the old man cried.

“We mean you no harm,” said Attarokib, seeing how the old fellow was frightened.

“Are there any more of you?” the latter inquired.

“No,” I replied, “that will be all of us.”

“Then I can look in the other barrels.” And he proceeded to do so.

“Old man,” I asked, “is this how you find your daily bread?”

“If I only found it!” was his reply.

“Then you starve a good deal of the time?” I began fingering my pockets to see if there was anything I could give him.

“A good most of the time.”

I produced the flask and offered it to him. He looked eagerly at the few drops of sparkling liquid in it, then took it with trembling hand. As he pulled the cork, the flask slipped out of his hand and was shattered. He merely shrugged his shoulders.

“I should have known better than to take it,” he said.

“You seem to think there is no use trying to better your condition,” I remarked pityingly.

“I belong to the Conscientious Pessimists!” he replied proudly.

“And who are they?”

“We believe in not trying to get anything. We’ve thought about our life here, and we know that all the good things we see are shown us only to tantalize us, to make us try to get them. But when we reach for them, they disappear. The Dustthrowers don’t let us get at them, or we die from trying too hard, or—if we get something—it turns out to be different from what we thought it was, and we are disappointed terribly.”

“Does it always happen that way?”

“Always. You just saw.” “But who are the Dustthrowers?”

“All kinds. Those that arrest and punish you, those that judge you, those that tell you to be honest and believe there is another and better life, and those that tell you to steal what you want, those that make you work, and those that don’t let you get work. All kinds of Dustthrowers.”

“Tell me, old man,” said Attarokib, who had kept silent during all this conversation, “Why don’t you kill yourself and be done with it?”

“Sometimes I think I should. But then I think that if I keep on maybe I’ll have some luck and become one of the magnates. They’ve got it good. Nothing to worry about ever. Only we workzumns have to suffer!”

“Wouldn’t the Dustthrowers bother you then?” I asked.

“O, you’ve got a lot of influence with the Dustthrowers if you’re a magnate. It’s the Dustthrowers that stop us from taking away all the good things the magnates own.”

“Why don’t you get rid of the Dustthrowers?”

“Why? We don’t dare. It’s the first business of a Dustthrower to prevent everyone from taking anything he wants that he can enjoy. By the same rule, they stop the magnates from taking away from us workzumns what little we have—like cur daughters, and wives. If we abolished the Dustthrowers, who would protect us from the magnates, and from one another? And then, suppose I were to become a magnate—who would keep the mobs from tearing my possessions away if there were no Dustthrowers?”

“You have such high hopes, and yet you call yourself a Conscientious Pessimist?”

“Sure. One can’t help hoping. We Conscientious Pessimists hope, but we don’t try. The others try—and you ought to see how they are disappointed and tantalized and unhappy a hundred times a day because they try!”

“Well, I am sorry for you.”

“You got the right one to be sorry for. Of all the sufferers, I am the most afflicted.”

“You?”

“Sure. Everybody else at least gets a chance to enjoy themselves a little bit. At night they go to dances, and theatres, and amusement parks. I only went to theatre two times in my life, and both times I got sick and couldn’t enjoy it. I’m the unluckiest Zuman!”

“Poor fellow. Well, since I can’t help you I’ll leave you to your hunting.” I spoke these words upon seeing a signal from Attarokib that he was eager to be off.

“Glad I got you away from that old man,” said Attarokib a few minutes later. “He was having a morbid influence upon you. Being a pessimist is

bad enough. But a Conscientious Pessimist—frightful. That type tries to convince you."

"I am afraid he has succeeded with me, at least in convincing me about his own misfortunes."

"Well, we are free. What do you wish to do now?"

"This body I am wearing is torturing me with its demand for food. The fact is we have tried to earn some food for our bodies, but were prevented. I think justice demands that we restore them to their owners, who, being wiser than we in the ways of this planet, may succeed in procuring some food."

"I quite agree with you. Let us sit down in this dark hallway and release ourselves from these bodies. Then we shall plan further."

We did accordingly, and had the satisfaction of being freed from the pains, the stench, the filth, and gnawing hunger of the bodies we had borrowed. Besides that, we enjoyed the sight of the two genuine tramps who, waking up at night in a strange place, were mightily astonished. Yet they were sensible enough to realise

that a return to their late hotel would mean either coal-shoveling or worse, and so they decided to sneak quietly out of the city that very night.

"I, for one, am satisfied with my experiences in the bodies of the people of this planet," I declared. "I've had enough of them. Yet I would like to see a little of it as I am now, with my sight so much better."

"I'm with you through all Hell," responded Attarokib. "But there's no need for you to see only a little of it. We have our girdles, and we could circumnavigate the planet in a few moments if we desired. To see better, however, we will limit our speed. Let us begin in this direction."

C7. We flew, then, a considerable distance, and I was amazed to notice how different the same locality looked to the superior sight of my ego when I did not have to peer through the crude eyes of the outer bodies of its inhabitants. It was as if a new world had opened up before me. I saw all the misery of the Zumen so plainly that I was no longer tempted to dispute with my guide when he said that this was the only Hell in the universe.

Many wonderful things I saw on this flying trip, chief among them the division of the planet into separate enclosures. A series of curious walls extended over all the surface, twisting and turning and crossing one another

in every direction without a semblance of order in their pattern. Oceans and lands, fields and forests, deserts and rivers were cut across by lengths of these walls varying in size from a hundred miles to several thousand.

Zu was by this means divided into a multitude of enclosures, no two of the same size or shape. Some were and narrow, others followed no geometric lines but

bulged jaggily here and contracted in sweeping curves there in a senseless, nondescript fashion.

These walls did not actually consist of substantial material like stone or brick but rather of an intangible stuff that I took to be some compound of highly colored shadows, mostly yellow and green, though there was no lack of black and white. Nor were they built to any formidable heights. But despite their being easily scalable or penetrable I witnessed scarcely any instances of the Zumen attempting to migrate from one enclosure to another by means of bursting through or vaulting over intervening walls. Later I discovered large numbers of Zumen gathered on both sides of one of these walls, each side trying to push it further into the territory of its neighbor, and scrapping bloodily over a difference in some inches of territory that both claimed. In the main, however, the limited number of individuals whom I observed to pass from one enclosure into the next did so through tiny apertures in certain brimstone gates set in each wall.

These occasional passages were accomplished in a peculiarly unpleasant fashion. The migrants would crawl upon their bellies through the openings which, to my utter amazement, were invariably too small to admit a Zuman of ordinary proportions even in that groveling position.

I understood that these obstructions were intentionally arranged because the inhabitants of one enclosure did not much honor their neighbors. But though I had already acquainted myself with the character of the Zumen, I was startled to learn that anyone desiring to enter an enclosure not his own had to fit himself to the shape of the hole through which he proposed to pass. He might be too corpulent, which meant that he must

starve himself or cut his flesh down to the requisite size. If he were too lean, he must fatten his flesh until he was barely able to pass through the opening. The health of wayfarers was often ruined, or their lives lost, in

trying to suit themselves to too many holes. Even then, however, foreigners in any enclosure were not safe from molestation. And often it was pitiable, if not downright funny, to see them trying to grow taller or shorter, skinnier or stouter, in order to look like the natives of the enclosure they were visiting. The worst of it was, however, that a traveler not only had to undergo the humiliation of crawling upon the belly through an absurd inlet, but if the natives did not like him because he could not grow his beard, or his ears, as long as was customary in the land, they would force him to crawl back in exactly the same way.

Upon further observation I noticed that the climate differed in every enclosure, as well as the vegetation. In some instances the disparity was so great that the different enclosures might well have belonged to different planets. Accordingly the inhabitants of each enclosure held firmly that their own climate and vegetation was the best of all on the whole planet. This was the foundation rock of their laws that all who entered their enclosure for the purpose of exchanging vegetables must cast off their own appearance and assume that of the locality—the difference being based upon the superior character of the local climate and vegetation. But although the inhabitants of each enclosure took as much pride in their climate and boasted as much of their vegetation as if they themselves had created these phenomena, this did not hold them from striving whenever they could to possess themselves of the enclosures of other Zumen together with their inferior climate and vegetation.

In a few isolated enclosures at the extremes of the planet I saw a remarkable reversal of conditions, which were, nonetheless, consistent with the hatred of the Zumen of all who were not natives of their own enclosure and with their love of stealing the territory of foreign enclosures. Small groups from distant enclosures had taken over the rulership of isolated places, and the oppression of the helpless natives was regarded as a matter of course, since they differed from the powerful foreigners in many ways.

At first I wondered that the hundreds of millions of oppressed Zumen did not rise up against their enemies and cast them out. But I discovered many reasons why they could not do so, the chief reason being the thousands of differing superstitions to which the natives adhere. They are divided among themselves in large communities each holding steadfastly to

its own sacred collection of superstitions and hating its neighbor which is equally devoted to a somewhat different collection.

Attarokib informed me that these absurd superstitions had kept the inhabitants of these enclosures in peculiar and subjected misery even before the coming of the foreign groups. The latter had only taken advantage of the backwardness of the natives, and of the ease with which they could be made to preoccupy themselves with fighting one another on account of their diverse and irreconcilable superstitions, to enslave and oppress them. Moreover, the numerically few foreigners had brought with them strange and frightful weapons which terrorized the natives. Chief among these contrivances was a certain very long whip which cracked with a deadly noise and at the same time spat forth a stream of saliva—a substance highly objectionable to the natives, who were cowed by fear of having their skins moistened with

it. They preferred to serve the foreigners rather than risk being sprinkled by the long whip's saliva. And in this alone did I find them unanimous.

One of my interesting discoveries was that the inhabitants of the different enclosures were distinctively different in appearance, so that the Zumen of each em closure resembled the inhabitants of some planet I had previously observed from the crystal park. It was as if each planet had sent a delegation of its natives to one of the enclosures of Zu for some purpose.

With the excellent vision I now enjoyed I was able to see the work of the Dustthrowers—how they prevented every inhabitant of Zu from taking anything he wanted by throwing various kinds of dust in his eyes. It was on account of this that Attarokib had called Zu "the dusty planet.-" And whereas on the other planets that I had seen from the crystal park whatever a person wanted came to him with the wish, on Zu, due to the activities of the Dustthrowers, whatever a person wished for eluded him, or faded if he ever got it and became good only for exciting jealousy. The planet was a hotbed of jealousy, fertile with greed, everyone wanting what another seemed to have gotten, none ever finding contentment in what he had obtained, everyone envying someone who in turn envied someone else, ad infinitum.

At most, someone became a magnate. This meant that he could own a quilt a thousand yards long, and suffer from trying to use it when one of two yards would have given him more happiness; or he could own a

thousand beds, and be so worried and busy taking care of them that he could never get any sleep; or he could keep a stable with a thousand horses, and be so occupied in looking after them that he would never have time to go anywhere.

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Well do I remember an envied magnate who lived alone in a huge house in which each room was measured by the acre. I saw him walk half a mile from kitchen to dining room carrying a pair of steaming eggs on a plate. Then he walked back to the kitchen for a pinch of salt. And the magnates were never satisfied, but tried to increase their exaggerated belongings!

"Attarokib," I said at last, "if it were not that the people of this planet sometimes do enjoy themselves—as the Conscientious Pessimist confessed—I would agree that this is indeed Hell: not the sort of Hell I had been taught to believe in, but in fact a worse Hell."

"The Conscientious Pessimist was mistaken, Sepsafem," my guide replied. "Do you remember that on those occasions when he did visit a place of amusement he could not enjoy it? Well, so it is with everyone. But each rare dine Zumen or Zuwomen are at one of these places they dunk their neighbors are enjoying it, looking on themselves as the sole unfortunates."

"This is too frightful " I remarked. "This planet is monstrous, its arrangements seem to be maliciously designed to tantalize and torture the people who live on it. What is back of it all?"

"As soon as you grew reflective I knew that question was coming. But I shall not answer it. Instead, I shall advise you to look there."

I looked, and saw, in a deserted, arid, lifeless locality. a small opening on the side of a hill. I declared that it was not a particularly interesting thing to watch.

"That is because you do not know what is there: But I am going to give you added power of sight. Take these leaves—" and Attarokib produced two leaves from a fold in his girdle, "and put them over your eyes—I

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shall do likewise with these two. I brought them from the crystal park. Then look at that opening." I did as my guide instructed. With the crystal leaves over my eyes I glanced at the hole in the hill. The cavern, for such it was, had grown bright and visible, and I found, moreover, that I could see right

through the physical matter of the planet. As I grew accustomed to this marvelous power I saw that the opening led into a great underground highway, a beautiful tunnel, leading into a vast secret kingdom.

CHAPTER EIGHT
THE INVISIBLE HEGEMONY

The cave—The monsters of the underground—A celebration in the royal square—I discover that we are followed—At the royal tanks—My shadow's claims—An audience with the Queen—the history of the planet and the Dustthrowers—The underground museum—Attarokib becomes a Guardian—He raids a house of vice—His adventure in the hospital—Departure from Zu.

C1. At sight of the strange scene in the cave that became visible through the crystal leaves I understood that new and interesting discoveries concerning the planet Zu were in store for me. Not waiting for Attarokib's consent I made ready to pass into the tunnel. As I started forward, a troup of strange, monstrous creatures flying over the underground highway towards the opening of the cave came into view.

The subsurface beings had the appearance of dreadful, distorted frogs. Enormous, saucerlike, colorless eyes stared out of continually bobbing heads. Broad, grinning, revolting mouths that terminated in a sudden sharp point revealed a tongueless cavity when opened. Two cavities in the sides of the head served them for ears.

Their repulsiveness was more appreciable because their ugly froggish features resembled in a degree those of the human. In consistency they were ethery rather than material; resembling the stellarians, rather than the outer body of their nearer neighbors the Zumen, in this respect. Their locomotion was accomplished mostly by soaring through the air with a breath-taking swiftness that made them seem frightful flying frogs. The huge ones in especial made this unpleasant impression upon me; for, though all of one height, they varied in fatness from terrifying immensity to needle-like thinness. I learned later that these creatures were born in their full length, but grew fatter if liberally fed.

Drawing aside to let them pass out, I waited patiently for a few minutes. But the froghins seemed to have changed their mind about leaving the cave. I approached the opening again, just in time to see the last huge members of the troup pass into the outer air; and as they did so, they suddenly vanished from sight. Their disappearance did not mystify me, however, for

I now saw the cause of it. The moment each of them arrived at the exit of their underground kingdom, he instantly changed his appearance and became in effect a speck of dust, or a white spot of light. I recalled having seen these specks in the air over all the planet, but had not suspected their identity. With the aid of the crystal leaves over my eyes I recognized them plainly.

The troup, turned to a condition which would make them almost invisible, and certainly unrecognizable, to the Zumen, now departed in all directions. But I no longer hastened to enter their domain.

"Is it safe to go in there?" I asked.

"Quite safe, I believe," answered my guide. "They are not as inhospitable as the people on the surface."

My fear of these wonderful monsters being for the present allayed—but not completely, for I had noticed that Attarokib had a taste for adventure and a penchant for getting us into trouble—I entered the cave. It was a beautiful place, the walls decked with many ornaments and set with sparkling jewels. The highway stretched far and straight for fifteen or twenty miles. We covered the distance in seconds, but I noticed that we were going down steadily, deeper and deeper into the bowels of the planet. At last the cave took a sharp turn and we found ourselves before a huge square of more than fifty miles from which many wide avenues led to different parts of the kingdom.

It was a scene of rapturous beauty. Palaces and mansions faced the square on all sides, whose beauty I had seen surpassed only in Niames. One in particular, the largest in size, dazzled me with its beauty of design and ornamentation. At least five miles high was its tallest tower, and its width was no less. A balcony facing the square was nearly a mile deep.

A great noise from one of the avenues brought thousands of curious froghin heads to the numerous windows facing the square, and attracted my attention. The cause of the disturbance was soon apparent. A joyous parade of shouting, leaping, gesticulating froghins came in sight and soon filled the square, where they continued to dance and cry out in unison.

“Hail the Attackers!” I heard one group shouting. “Long live the Anti-Each-Other Enclosures!” a second group answered. “Hurrah for the Victorious Majorities!” a third group chorused. “The King! The Queen!” another crowd shouted. “The King! The Queen!” all the froghins began to chime together.

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Soon these cries had the desired effect. A window in the largest palace swung open and the rulers of the froghins appeared upon the great balcony, their monstrous features bathed in smiles that reached almost completely around their heads. They were horrible to behold—being by far the fattest of the underground denizens.

At sight of the royal pair, their subjects uttered a single deafening cheer and then fell with their mouths to the ground in obeisance. The result of this sudden act was that Attarokib and I were left standing prominently in front of Their Majesties. I trembled as their monstrous orbs pierced through me, but Attarokib smiled and simply offered them a slight bow of recognition. My uneasiness was somewhat relieved at this, but I wondered that both King and Queen seemed to look upon me as if they knew me and were surprised to see me there; the King, in fact, appeared rather annoyed.

The froghins had risen by now and waited in respectful silence until His Majesty gave a signal. Then one of the fattest among them came to the front. Bowing deeply, he spoke freely in the language of thought.

“Glorious, Mighty, Majestic, Sagacious Rulers of the outer and inner regions of the planet Zu! Your loyal children and subjects are gathered to celebrate a happy occurrence among the lowly denizens of the surface who call themselves Zumen. This day the workzumns of the planet’s chief nutshell magnate, a faithful servant of our kingdom, made a most charming attack upon certain of their fellow-workzumns who were foreign in their enclosure. Not many were hurt until the Guardians, led by one of our loyal Dustthrowers arrived with their clubs. But nevertheless the flame of hatred among the Zumen rose quite high and we were able to gather a most noble Light-Tax which has been stored in the royal

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tanks. We crave your commendation for this glorious work!”

The King replied with a voluble oration in praise of the noble work, emphasizing that his dear, dear children must continue ever more to

increase the number and virulence of such outbreaks. We did not wait for the conclusion, as this seemed a good opportunity to slip away from the royal observation.

We entered one of the wide avenues lined with many beautiful houses and gardens. I wondered that the froggish inhabitants of this kingdom should have the taste and ingenuity to construct these splendid places: and while my dislike of them grew, my respect for their intelligence kept pace. As we turned from street to street it seemed to me that we were being followed by a lean froghin of rather familiar appearance. No matter where we went he always appeared about fifty paces behind us. It made me feel uncomfortable, but I did not wish to tell Attarokib about my uneasiness.

C2. A few miles from the great square we came upon another open place, much larger than the first, and vastly different in appearance. Here were no houses but huge tanks, each one several miles high and more than a mile in diameter. Near each tank were froghins with huge books in their hands making records. I approached to see what I could gather of this mysterious business.

A line of froghins stood around a tank. At a signal the first approached, opened his mouth, and emptied a stream of some white gas into the tank. A froghin official measured the quantity and recorded it. Another official asked where the Light-Tax came from.

"I sucked it up from the hand of my Zuman parent when he struck his servant!" was the reply, which was immediately recorded.

"Your share is properly inscribed," said the official. "One-third for His Majesty, one-third for Her Majesty, one-sixth for the maintenance of indigent froghins, one-twelfth for those who assisted you, and one-twelfth for yourself, according to the fair division of taxes collected for our kingdom. You may return to work."

The froghin departed, and the next on the line proceeded likewise to empty a stream of white gas into the tank.

"From the toe of my Zuman parent when he kicked his dog," said the froghin in reply to the official's question. He was dispatched after proper

records were made and the next froghin contributed a small stream of what they called the Light-Tax.

"From the lips of my Zuman parent when she kissed her husband's friend," he explained.

"No more than that?" the official inquired.

"Nothing else transpired today, it was done in the husband's presence when his back was turned," the collector of the tax explained.

The froghin who followed brought a very large quantity, explaining that it was the tax on a murder. The next one deposited a tax on a false oath by "his Zuman parent." Marveling at all this I turned to my guide to request an explanation, and again caught the eyes of the lean froghin who had been following us. His malevolent glance made me feel so uneasy that I changed my question before I had begun it.

"Attarokib," I said, "have you noticed that we are being followed?"

"Who, we?" replied the guide in surprise. "You must be mistaken. Who would be following us?"

"See there—that lean, hungry looking froghin. I've noticed him behind us ever since we left the royal square."

Attarokib looked at the froghin, then at me, and then he began to laugh heartily. "O, so he has been following you about!" he exclaimed. "Now I wonder! This is quite uncommon! Let's put him to a test. We'll lead him a chase and see if you are right." Attarokib led the way into a new street. From there we turned into another street, flew over a great house into still another, turned a few corners, went around in a circle for awhile, and then paused.

The froghin was a few paces behind us! As I looked upon him I was impressed again with his familiar appearance. He seemed to resemble someone I knew!

"Come, we'll give him a surprise," said Attarokib. We walked leisurely to the corner, turned and waited. A moment later our shadow appeared. As we came face to face the froghin, seeing that he was trapped, looked defiant.

"What is this?" asked Attarokib. "What do you mean by following us about?"

"I'm not following you," replied the froghin. "It's him!" and he looked at me.

“What do you want?” the guide continued.

“I’m hungry, and I want him to give me sustenance.”

“What do I owe you?” I asked in surprise.

“Everything!” said the froghin. “You gave me life, and you must feed me.”

“Explain yourself,” I demanded.

“You have been starving me lately,” said the froghin. “Since you have stopped shooting game for pleasure, hating women, being conceited, swearing violently, and treating your subordinates harshly, I haven’t collected a bit of Light-Tax from you!”

“Nor are you likely to do so very soon,” put in Attarokib, “so take yourself off and stay away.”

“I will not. I will stay with my father until he feeds me!”

“Please yourself while you can, which won’t be very long. But stay a good way off if you must follow.” Then to me—“Come, we’ll complain in high quarters about this. We owe to pay our respects to Their Majesties, anyway, and now is as good as later.”

We flew back to the royal square, the froghin following not far behind.

“What is this claim he has upon me?” I asked.

“Well, he says he is your child—and judging from his face I should say the resemblance does not make him out to be a liar.”

The guide’s words were amazing enough—but at the same time I realized why the froghin had seemed familiar. He resembled me!

“Yet, I don’t understand,” I persisted. “In fact I am horrified by what he says—and you have not denied it!”

“Why should I deny the truth?”

“Then—”

“Don’t worry. You’ll find out about it later.”

“Will you tell me what is this Light-Tax that the froghins deposited in those tanks?”

“It is their food and the source of their prosperity. They collect it from the inhabitants of the surface in return for anything the Zumen obtain—since the planet

with all its goods belong to the King of the froghins.”

“Then every Zuman must pay such a tax?”

“No. Besides the Light-Tax there is the Heavy-Tax, a tax which does not yield much to the payer.”

“Tell me about it.”

“Not now. Here we are at the Palace.”

We had arrived at the royal square. Attarokib communicated with various officials, finally obtaining an audience. We entered the palace, and I was awestruck at its grandeur. In the Royal Salon we found the Queen seated upon a throne of indescribable beauty, carved out of a single slab of sparkling ebon resembling polished coal, and ornamented with turquoise, sardonyx, gold, and other precious minerals. The King’s throne was unoccupied. We approached respectfully and, as Attarokib bowed deeply, I followed suit.

“You are welcome!” said the Queen in a gracious manner.

“We are honored!” replied Attarokib politely.

“His Majesty is occupied and regrets that he cannot receive you now,” the Queen continued, addressing Attarokib. I understood from this that my guide must be a very great personage.

“His Majesty regrets it no more than I,” said Attarokib.

“What brings you to our poor kingdom?”

“My friend’s curiosity. Your Highness permits us to see a little of your great kingdom?”

“Gladly,” the Queen replied, but there was no enthusiasm in her manner.

“I observe that some changes in your customs have taken place since I was here last,” continued Attarokib.

“Changes here? What changes?”

“It seems that guests are shadowed by your servants—no doubt to protect them from harm!”

“Of course, of course—merely to protect them from harm.”

“It is very thoughtful of your Majesty—though I, for one, would gladly release your servant from a duty which he must find unpleasant, since he does not seem to be happy. I believe that in your Majesty’s orderly domains there is so little danger, that I could protect my friend and myself.”

“You are as witty as ever, friend Attarokib. It pleases me that you are here. And since you desire it, we shall remove your guardian.”

“Your Majesty is even more gracious than ever.”

The Queen was melting with delight under Attarokib's flattery—which, considering that she looked like a very fat frog, seemed odd to me. My guide, however, took it as a matter of fact and stayed on a good half hour, expatiating upon Her Majesty's goodness, graciousness, charm, wit, taste and beauty! Listening to him, my respect for Baron Munchhausen vanished completely. That worthy, I thought, was only an amateur liar compared to Attarokib.

At last we took our leave. Though I sought my froghin shadow, he was nowhere in sight. I questioned Attarokib concerning his flattery of the Queen.

"You think I was flattering her? No, indeed! She is really very witty, and has good taste—you saw with what beautiful things she surrounds herself —"

"Very well, I concede those and the other qualities you ascribed to her. But you mentioned, and without a blush, that she is beautiful!"

"What a poor courtier you would make!" replied Attarokib. "However, even that was the truth—you

haven't seen her in some of her other forms. You know the froghins change their appearance."

C3. Before I could reply we came in sight of a huge building into which Attarokib led the way. I recognized it at once as a school. Several hundred young froghins were seated upon stools in front of a sheet of black. We found seats at the rear of the class and listened awhile to the teacher. He was telling the froghins that for the proper performance of their duties they must understand the history of the kingdom, which he was going to display to them. At the conclusion of his lecture an assistant froghin brought in a curious instrument consisting of two small spools. A timestrip, he called it. Around one of the spools a thin strip was tightly wound. The spools were placed behind the black sheet, the teacher gave one of them a sharp twist that made it spin, and in a moment a surprising thing happened. As the strip began to wind from one spool on to the next, the black sheet became light and an animated scene was exhibited upon it. I recognized the place as belonging to the surface of Zu. As the scene progressed, the teacher explained its meaning.

It was the most extraordinary and most interesting lesson in history that I bad ever attended. The events recorded by some mysterious process upon the infinitesimally thin strip, were pictured upon the black sheet. And whatever was not shown the teacher explained. In an hour I had a thorough understanding of how the planet Zu had begun, how it had developed, and how the King and Queen of the underground had established a complete secret hegemony over the inhabitants of the surface.

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At first there was only a single family of Zumen. The King and Queen, owners of the planet, but not constituted so that they would subsist on its material products, sought a way to enslave the Zuman family. They established two taxes—a Light-Tax and a Heavy-Tax, permitting each Zuman and Zuwoman to choose which they would pay. The Zumen, not understanding what was wanted of them, paid a Heavy-Tax. This consisted of sweating and toiling enough to produce food for hundreds, while they themselves received less than they needed. The rest somehow disappeared —they did not understand it. But the black sheet showed the King and Queen with their own hands causing most of the Zumen's toil to go to waste!

The royal pair, working in secret to collect the Heavy-Tax from the Zumen, but despising it because it was no food for them, sought by this to teach the Zumen to pay them a Light-Tax. Their opportunity was not long in coming.

The Zumen pioneers had succeeded by heroic efforts and untold suffering in establishing a husbandry of a sort. Barehanded they had cultivated a small garden, domesticated a few cows and some sheep, and begun ah most to wrest from the unfriendly planet a frugal livelihood. Mutual cooperation had enabled them to grow some vegetables and obtain a quantity of milk. But one day it suddenly occurred to a young son of the family—he happened to be physically the strongest of them all—that he was too tired to continue working on like the rest of them. He would like better, he thought, to spend his days in leisurely pursuits, such as bathing in the cool streams, sounding the four discordant notes of a rough reed flute he possessed, and tramping in the woods

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with his young wife. His brothers and sisters, he refleeted, could continue attending the homestead and provide and prepare the food for the whole family—with whom he would share as formerly.

The more he thought about it the surer he became that it was a very happy idea. Finally he proposed his plan to his brothers. It turned out that each and every one of them had been maturing the same idea in his mind. They were all agreed that his plan was a splendid one. They were eager to put it into operation immediately. But each one was sure that he himself should have the privilege of leisure. Quite an affair developed—the first quarrel in the family. Words led to harsher words, and the most excited one of them, he who had first mentioned the idea that was at the root of their fight, struck one of his brothers a blow that killed him on the spot.

At the moment of his crime the fratricide felt a wave of self love enwrapping his whole body. The unhappy murderer did not know that the overpowering stream was coming to him from the underground Queen, who, invisible to the crude Zuman eyes, was present at this turbulent scene, long planned by her royal mate. It was she who embraced the killer passionately at the climactic instant. The next moment, all wreathed in victorious smiles, she stretched forth her arms to the eager King, presenting to him his first stepchild—a lustful little creature in the semblance of its fratricidal progenitor, fresh and healthy as a wild young colt. Anxiously had the rulers of the planet waited for this hour. Now they were jubilant at having gained a real subject, and a fine child and assistant in addition.

The newly born froghin then collected the first Light-Tax. He inserted the sharp point of his mouth into his Zuman parent’s breast and sucked out a quantity

of the translucent light which was hidden by his Zuian body! He then went off with the King and Queen to their underground habitation, where the stream of light was emptied into a container and part of it shared by them.

In the meantime the murderer, rather frightened by his heinous deed, and feeling a mixture of emptiness and heaviness inside of himself, took to his feet and ran into the nearby forest. Hunger and terror drove him back after sunset to the family homestead. His arrival was met with dread silence. They feared to antagonize him. They let him have his portion of the evening repast as if nothing untoward had happened. During the few weeks following, not a single word was exchanged between the killer and his

kinsmen. He would eat his breakfast in the morning, disappear into the woods for the remainder of the day, and return for evening rations. The underground rulers, however, prepared to reward him who had paid the first Light-Tax.

One night the murderer was lolling upon the soft grass when a new idea was whispered to him by his froghin-babe, now in the shape of a dust speck. If he should capture a ram and place him with the few sheep they owned the domesticated flock would be mightily increased!

Without saying a word to his brothers this time about the idea that had come to him out of the night, he stalked forth next morning into the nearby hills. At the end of a strenuous day he was seen returning to the homestead dragging an unwilling ram by the horns. This captive he finally let loose among the sheep in their roughly fenced enclosure. The ram was still there in the morning, and would no more leave the place except to accompany the sheep wherever they were herded. A

few months later the flock began to increase rapidly in numbers.

Applying his experience, he repeated the same scheme with the goats and cows, and met with a fair degree of success. Before long he had promoted several sizable herds and was able to boast of a plentiful supply of beef, milk, and wool. His brothers of course could not help realizing that it was he who increased the family's prosperity enormously. They began to regard him with new respect, as a master and elder among them. Consequently they acquiesced in his maintaining full liberty to do whatever he pleased. He had never worked with the rest of them since his crime. Now he became their recognized Hedzumn. He took the lion's share of everything, gave out orders to the growing numbers of the family, allotted each one a separate portion of work. He finally made them all practically his servants, governing them according to his whim, taking the grown up females for his wives. There was none able or, for the present, inclined to stop him from doing anything he pleased.

All these events came about by the maneuvering of the wily King. He gave the murderer power and good fortune, and saw to it that his judgment on matters of doubt should be vindicated. In turn he collected from the unwitting Zuman a heavy Light-Tax for every gross act of indecency

towards his brothers, whom he insulted rudely at the least provocation and attacked physically when an attempt was made to disobey him. By every such deed he was giving birth to additional froghins, all of whom were joyously adopted by the royal pair of Hegemonia; and each such birth-giving weakened him personally so that his ego's light could be drawn out.

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The Timestrip then showed the murderer grown too old and weak to maintain himself in his position as master of all his family. By now, however, the clan had waxed so numerous that they separated into several groups. Each one of them was dominated by a single Hedzumn who was sure to have been maneuvered into this eminent position by the King of the underground for reasons well known to His Majesty. The King's custom was to help those who were ready and eager to help themselves by foul means or fouler. In this fashion, by seeing to it that the payers of the Light-Tax should receive the Heavy-Tax of the planet's materials which others payed by hard productive labor, the sub-Zu King increased his own cohorts by leaps and bounds.

As the Zumen were fruitful and multiplied their kind it became ever more difficult for the Hedzumns to control and manage their tribes of workzumns. Necessity forced them to grant partial liberty to certain of their subjects and appoint them as under-managers and assistant-Hedzumns. Their duties were to supervise their fellow-Zumen's work and make sure that each toils as much as possible whilst receiving as little as might be for his labors. The under-managers were required to punish mercilessly those who lagged or showed signs of resisting the Hedzumn's authority. Naturally only those who relished work of this sort won promotion to the positions of assistant-managers. This, it scarcely needs saying, in no way conflicted with the King's sly plan.

Out of the froghins born from the evil practices of the Hedzumns and their vicious assistants; out of the enormous Light-Tax unwittingly paid by them for the privileges they enjoyed; out of the contributions of the slaving workzumns themselves toward the prosperity of the secret hegemony by their wickedness with one another,

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by their lying and stealing; out of these plenteous sources the invisible hegemony developed to gigantic proportions, counting its population by the

millions, measuring its wealth in fabulous figures, and growing by the day, by the hour, by the minute.

The King saw to it that the most tyrannous characters should become the Hedzumns and the wardens of the planet's goods, so that their subjects would receive scarcely enough to keep themselves alive, thereby being induced to turn robbers and murderers. Under the same plan one Hedzumn was continually under temptation to appropriate the possessions of others in his position. The tribal Hedzumns were thus always embroiled in disputes which led invariably to armed battle among them. Not one of these developments but fattened the size of the Light-Tax paid to the hegemony. The bloodiest warriors, the most merciless oppressors, were rewarded with the highest honors and greatest power on Zu, for they were the payers of the highest Light-Tax. In time the Hedzumn of each group built himself an enclosure to keep out the neighboring groups and prevent them from stealing his goods; and to hide behind its walls the goods he would often steal from others. And in order to keep his own servants faithful to him he taught them to hate and fear and despise all who were not of their own enclosure.

Such was the early and ancient history of the planet Zu and its inhabitants according to the story unfolded on the black sheet in the underground school of history. At the present time the power and scope of the froghin hegemony are vastly elaborated. The planet Zu now yields up enough of everything to make life a round of happiness for all its inhabitants. Everything still belongs, however, to the subsurface kingdom. Every ounce of edibles, every tiniest article of comfort, every source of

happiness of whatever variety is carefully guarded by the sub-Zu hegemony through its billions of invisible froghins. They distribute these valuables with meticulous accuracy, to each Zuman according to the tax he is willing to pay, Heavy or Light, and according to the quantity of the payment.

The pillars of the system are a million ways of keeping every Zuman discontented, tantalized, suffering, toiling, wanting, envying, craving for comforts, pleasures, and happiness. They cannot acquire any of these things without paying a tax to the hegemony. Since the Heavy-Tax brings in return only the bare necessities of life—less than the tax itself—the Zumen are induced to drop their offerings into the coffers of the Light-Tax, to do violence to their fellows, to betray their own selves and their brethren. The

larger the scale of betrayal, the greater the Light-Tax paid, the handsomer the reward.

Consistent with this arrangement those Zumen who slave hardest, enjoy the least, know most want, and suffer perpetual distress are the same who subscribe to the Heavy-Tax, paying little or nothing of the Light-Tax. On the other hand those who do least work and live in excess of luxury and comfort are the Zumen who pay the most generous Light-Tax; and these are found frequently occupying high and estimable positions among their fellows, often being the Hedzumns of benevolent and pious Zuian groups. But this is not actually a paradox. They could never rise to such lofty eminences and attain so much power and opulence unless they were loyal servitors of the invisible hegemony. They would never win promotion to any stage of dominant influence over their fellows and accumulate the goods that accompanies such position (although for other reasons they may not, and seldom do, enjoy their superficial success,) unless

they were somehow, directly or indirectly, assisting the King to levy increasing Light-Taxes upon the multitudes of Zumen; unless they contribute to the multiplication of wrongdoings, crime, betrayal and suffering among the Zumen at large.

C4. Although the whole lesson of that classroom interested me profoundly, for it explained much that had been mysterious to me before, I was most fascinated by the history of the Dustthrowers which was unfolded incidentally. From the ranks of the Dustthrowers came the heaviest payers of the Light-Tax, hence they were prime favorites in the underground kingdom. The business of the Dustthrowers being to prevent all Zumen from getting what they want, to keep them unhappy, they served naturally to induce the Zumen to better their conditions by paying Light-Taxes. For this service the Dustthrowers were well rewarded by the invisible hegemony. The first Dustthrower I have already mentioned—he was the first slave whom the Hedzumn promoted to watch over his fellows, to see that they labor faithfully and keep nothing for themselves. In accepting this advanced position he recognized his master’s right to keep slaves and appropriate their produce. Acting and speaking this lie to his former yoke-mates, he was deliberately throwing dust in their eyes and laying a

foundation for others to follow in his footsteps. He became thus the father of all the contemporary armies of Dustthrowers upon the planet Zu.

The second Dustthrower, officially enrolled as such in the records of the hegemony, was a slave who revolted against his overseer and killed him. Into the mountain wilderness he fled to escape the wrath of his Hedzumn. There he became a desperado, organized a bandit gang of

runaways like himself, plundered little villages and poor homes, and later offered them protection against bandits in return for a regular payment. He lied in accepting this tribute knowing there were no other bandits than those he led. He extracted an ample livelihood by robbing the people so that he should not rob them. His posterity became autocrats among the Zumen. The children of his bandit aids became the statesmen, royal councilors, ministers, and governmental majordomos of those noble Zuzerains.

The third Zuman to be written down by the froghin chroniclers as a Dustthrower was that Hedzumn who first introduced a regular category of punishments for those who disobeyed him. It was yet early in the history of the Hedzumns, but already this brutal ruler had made many demands upon his subjects which were extremely unreasonable, based solely upon his whim, and without regard to the ability of the people to behave accordingly. Since he scarcely even troubled himself to publicize his multifarious new decrees, (and not infrequently forgot them himself within a short while after their promulgation,) there were bound to be many purposeful and urn intentional infractions. This inspired him to invent a code of merciless punishments for his disobedient slaves, a different punishment for the breach of each rule. As he methodically classified the diverse consequences of violating different decrees, he bad incidentally to classify the decrees too. It occurred to him then that people might study his code and obey it, depriving him of the royal prerogative of inflicting appropriate punishments. To overcome this danger he introduced decrees conflicting with earlier decrees, not repealing the former. Now, he was sure, no one could wholly escape his royal wrath.

Being somewhat cautious, however, lest historians should accuse him of self-contradiction, he worded his enactments in such language that no one

could ever quite understand what he meant, and he would interpret them upon each occasion as most convenient. He became the progenitor of all the Zuian equivalents of suscipient barmasters, barmen, and lawmanufacturers who behave like brutal tyrants with the defenceless of their planet, tread roughshod upon the truth, and throw dust in everyone's eyes by declaring they are merely maintaining orderly processes, precedent and progress.

Fourth on the froghin list of Dustthrowers was the first Zuman who addressed the suffering, debased, beaten, maltreated, hungry workzumns with the proposition that only their bad luck and the wish of their Maker were responsible for their hard lot—not their rapacious Hedzumn. He preached, consistently, that it was not the duty of the Hedzumn to better their condition so as to equal his own, and that they must be happy in the opportunity to bear his yoke. For these declarations his master freed him and retired him on a pension for life, appointing him to be an official spiritual advisor to his slaves, and ordering them to respect and honor him accordingly. The froghins, seeing how ably he falsified the truth, promptly marked him as one who blinds the people by throwing pious dust in their eyes, making it impossible for them to recognize any doctrine of genuine spiritual truths. He became the father of all manner of Theoproxies who bless the warlords of Zu, chastise the workzumns, and castigate the Hedzumns with a pious "Good morning," and "May you prosper, Sir Hedzumn!"

There was one slave who discovered the secret of bowing arrows and offered it to his master as a means of subduing other groups and of keeping the workzumns

in greater terror and subjection. He was rewarded with freedom for his discovery, and inscribed in the records of Hegemonia as the fifth Dustthrower. For although he knew his discovery was meant to increase bloodshed and oppression, he boasted and proclaimed that it would advance Peace and Security, Societation and Freedom, thereby hiding the truth from the people. He was the father of all the later Thinkuppers and Ologists of Zu whose numerous discoveries for the progress of the race they faithfully turn over to their Hedzumns to be used in more effective and gruesome warmaking, and for the increase of suffering among the dispossessed workzumns.

Many other types of Dustthrowers flourish upon the unhappy planet, but it would require a volume to list and describe them all. Without exception they are active in standing between the people and the truth, in throwing clouds of dust freely about so that it fills everybody's eyes, mostly not excepting their own. In the course of these functions the Dustthrowers lavish praises upon the Hedzumns and their accomplishments, call their rights divine, their birth noble, their lives honorable and modest, and their deeds heroic. Incidentally the blinders of the multitudes heap glory upon their own class, picturing themselves as indispensible benefactors, champions, leaders, and teachers. With all the dust they scatter widely it is impossible for the Zumen to recognize them as servants of a kingdom whose existence is not suspected. The Dustthrowers thus obstruct all ways to happiness, crying "you mustn't, you shouldn't, I won't let you"; surrounding the Zumen with such lies and restrictions as to keep them in perpetual ignorance, embitterment, drudgery; and above all holding them safely distant from any little comfort or enjoyment by forcing them to retreat at the moment when they are about to

lay hands upon anything desired, unless the invisible hegemony orders that someone shall receive certain materials; and even that one must take it in spite of the Dustthrowers.

To give importance to the class of Dustthrowers, to make their words sound authoritative, the King found another scheme effective. He instigated the erection of impressive and gorgeous temples, different ones for each type of Dustthrowing. In these were installed the exponents of the noxious art as the Masters and High Masters. Thus are they able to represent themselves to the populace as the learned sages of their respective cultures. In especial are the High Masters surrounded with exaggerated glamor, possessions, honor, fame and pomp, according to which they are looked upon as veritable super-Zumen. Their oraculations are regarded as sanctified by their office; none ventures to place them in question.

I left the class in history filled with new and interesting knowledge of the planet Zu. Yet I had more to learn, and at the next place we visited my curiosity was further satisfied. This was a museum of the underground kingdom where hundreds of statues of Zumen, servants and enemies of the hegemony, were erected. Beneath each statue was a suitable inscription giving the life of the Zuman and bis titles of nobility.

Most of the famous Dustthrowers were represented in the museum. One was marked as an Honoribble Eminenibble who had been in fact an imbecile. Another, an Honoribble Sacraquibble, had suffered all his life from a malignant secret disease. A third, inscribed as an Honoribble Martiabibble had died in an asylum for the insane. Reading the stories of these successful Dustthrowers I came away with the impression that not one of them

had actually known any more happiness than the most miserable Zuman on the planet! Many of these Honoribbles were marked as being on the planet the second, or tenth, or twenty-fifth time; one as being there the seventieth time! Such were the friends of the hegemony. Its enemies were inscribed as Rebels, and froghins were warned to remember their features, and to hate, despise, and persecute them. Tremendous rewards were offered to those froghins who would induce any of them to make peace with the hegemony by paying some Light-Tax.

The last that we saw of the underground kingdom was at its deepest part —at the very core of the planet. Here Attarokib took me to see a monstrous pile of ore, occupying more than one hundred cubic miles of space, that had the appearance of a huge furnace filled with flaming matter; and it had six huge arms that stretched, several hundred miles each, up into all sides of the planet. There was nothing about it to indicate what it was there for, yet it gave me the impression of being anything but a product of accident. But I did not inquire at the time, holding it in mind together with several other mysteries about the planet.

C5. A fast flight took us again to the entrance of the underground kingdom. Just before we came out I thought I glimpsed the froghin who had followed us around before. I mentioned it to my guide.

"Quite likely," he said. "I've been looking for him all the time myself."

"Why, do you mean he has actually been following—against his Queen's orders?"

"Following—but not against orders."

"Her promise—was a lie?"

“Of all the nice things I said to her, you didn’t happen to hear me mention anything about honesty or truth-telling, did you?”

“No. Then he was instructed only to keep out of sight?”

“Exactly. Well, here we are outside again. What shall it be now?”

“Now that I have the crystal leaves, I would like to look about a little and see the froghins at work.”

“Good. We’re on our way. Let us return to the city with which you are already familiar.”

We arrived there shortly. This time there was nothing mysterious about the activities of the Zumen. I saw millions of froghins, in thousands of unsuspicious disguises, hovering around the people, whispering to them, suggesting, urging. Thus were many Zuman ideas born. And each time that the subject of a froghin’s efforts obeyed, a new froghin was born, and some of the translucent light of his form was taken as a tax for the hegemony. It was soon evident that the most opulent Zumen were the commonest payers of the Light-Tax—but this time I understood that their opulence was the hegemony’s reward for supplying it with the food suitable to the froghin constitution: a part of the light of their own egoes.

As we passed over a street that I remembered—it was now near midnight in the city—I saw a green-uniformed Guardian, surrounded by a host of froghins, asleep in a dark doorway. A closer inspection of his features revealed that he was the very one who had beaten Attarokib and myself after our first effort to escape our coal-heaving master. Most of the houses in the neighborhood were dark, but a few showed many fights; and loud sounds, suggesting disorderliness, came out of them.

We found an open window in one. Entering, we passed through several rooms. The building was a brothel and a place where subtle-sweet poisons were sold to its frequenters.

“I have a plan,” said Attarokib.

“Proceed,” I urged.

“I am going to become a Guardian.”

“Ah—trouble again!”

“No. We’ll be leaving Zu shortly, and before I say farewell to it, which may be for a long time, I want to derive as much amusement from it as possible. If trouble comes, our friend the Guardian there will have to take it. He deserves it, after the way he behaved with us.”

“Well, if it’s your notion of amusement, go ahead. But what will I do?”

“You will stay close to me all the time.”

In the street again, Attarokib approached the sleeping Guardian and took possession of his body. Attarokib spoke in English.

“Sepsafem,” he said, “follow me wherever I go. Don’t speak to me because I can’t hear or see you in this body. But don’t lose sight of me.” Attarokib then walked quickly into a different street. A group of froghins, disguised, followed him closely, but there was a great deal of confusion among them, evidently due to the fact that a stranger was occupying their “father’s” body. He arrived finally in front of a fine house, walked up a few steps, and knocked with unnecessary loudness upon the door, as if to make sure he would awaken the entire household.

If that was his intention, he succeeded. The master of the house opened the door. Behind him came the mistress. Both were in night clothing. Attarokib held the door open a long while before he entered, obviously

to make sure I would be able to come in. He was invited to explain his presence.

“You are the Elder of the Guardians?” Attarokib asked.

“Certainly!” said the master. “Don’t you recognize your Elder?”

“Pardon me—you look different in your night-shirt. I have come to report that a criminal house is operating openly in my district.”

“What do you mean waking us all up this time of night to report such impossible nonsense?” thundered the Elder. “I shall have you removed!”

“What do you mean nonsense?” interrupted the Elder’s wife. “This is terrible news! To think that such a place exists in our pure city! You must have the place raided this very night!”

“My dear,” said the Elder, “such things are not for the ears of a lady. You had better retire and let me take care of this business!”

“I will not!”

“But my dear!” the Elder continued to protest. “You can’t stand here before a total stranger in a nightshirt! It’s positively immoral!”

The lady disappeared with an appropriate blush.

“And now for you,” said the Elder to Attarokib. “What house do you mean?”

“The second from the left end of the street.”

“What? You ignoramus! Don’t you know the owner is a friend of—but apparently you don’t. I thought you meant some new house had opened without making arrangements for protection. Now go back and mind your business.”

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Just then the Elder’s wife returned, now garbed in street clothes. “Well, aren’t you ready for the raid yet?” she asked. “I’m going along.”

“Why, there isn’t going to be any raid!” her husband declared. “The Guardian has made a mistake—there is no such house.”

“Oh, no!” said Attarokib solemnly, “I didn’t make any mistake. The house is there.”

“You—you—” the Elder could not find words to express himself. “Well, anyway, we have no court order, and without that there can be no raid.”

“But you have the right to issue such an order,” his wife protested.

“I can’t take the responsibility on myself.”

“I insist that you do your duty!” said the lady. The Elder was about to refuse, but a glance at his wife convinced him that it would be wiser to let her have her way.

“Very well,” he said. “I will dress and get a company of Guardians.”

He was gone for a long while, but finally returned dressed in a uniform of green and gold decked with a dozen medals, some inscribed “For Valorous Service in the Cause of Law and Order.” In the meantime Attarokib had fed the lady with a thousand horrible details of the house to be raided, all of which shocked her greatly.

We left the house. The Elder led us a long way until we reached the House of the Guardians. He selected half a dozen men and with these we marched upon the disorderly house, the Elder leading the way, his wife at his side, Attarokib behind them, I beside him, and the six chosen Guardians walking last in pairs. We walked, and walked, and walked. I was sure we were

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being led by a very circuitous route or we would have arrived long ago. At last the Elder called a halt.

“We must send someone to spy out the way,” he declared, “or we’ll fail to surprise them. You two—” he pointed to the last two Guardians in the troup—“go in advance and prepare the way for our raid.”

The two departed. We marched on a long time, perhaps half an hour, covering again streets we had passed before. At last we entered the right street and arrived before the right house. The lights had disappeared, and instead of noise there was total silence. The advance guard was waiting for us. They reported that a thorough investigation had convinced them this was the home of a respectable Zuman couple. There was no trace of vice in it.

"You shall be discharged for leading us on a vain chase," said the Elder wrathfully to Attarokib, "and punished for making false charges against a respectable home."

"Did I make charges against this house?" murmured Attarokib innocently.

"Certainly! I remember it well—you said the second house from the left end of the street!"

"But I meant the left end of the street when we face the other way," retorted Attarokib glibly, knowing that if the one house had been forwarned he could easily find another nearby.

The Elder was sorely confused by this turn of events. He insisted, and correctly, that this side of the street had been indicated. He had no intention of being led on another empty chase. But his wife had been very favorably impressed by Attarokib, and she had her way. We started forward. The Elder again proposed to send an advance guard. Attarokib objected. The Elder threatened

to have him punished for insubordination. His wife again took the Guardian's side, and had her way. Before even we reached the other end of the street Attarokib called a halt in front of a bright and noisy house.

"This is the place," he declared.

"But it's in the middle of the street!" the Elder protested.

"If the Guardian says here, we'll raid this house!" his wife ordered. She had a way of having her way with her husband. The door was open. We entered.

"This place is raided!" shouted the Elder and his six faithful men at the top of their voices.

Instantly men and women began to run from the rooms, many in various stages of undress. The Guardians ran hither and thither, knocking on doors

and shouting “This place is raided!” In five minutes not a person remained except the raiding party.

“Too bad,” said the Elder to his wife. “They were too fast for us. They’ve all escaped.”

“No!” said Attarokib, appearing at that moment from one of the rooms. “I have one of them.”

The prisoner was an old man who could not stand on his feet without Attarokib’s assistance. He clung tenaciously to a long pipe.

“Ah-hah!” exclaimed the Elder in virtuous indignation. “Breathing the sweet-poison fumes! You have done well to arrest him. Take him to the prison. Come,” he said to his wife, “we have had a hard night and this is no place for you. This noble Guardian will take care of the prisoner.”

As he led his wife out I saw a froghin sucking a Light-Tax from him. The same thing was happening to all the Guardians except Attarokib. The froghins around him were busy with nothing.

“Are you taking the old man to prison?” the Elder’s wife asked Attarokib.

“No, to a hospital,” he replied.

“How dare you!” screamed the Elder. “I said prison!”

Attarokib merely shrugged his shoulders lifted the old man upon his back, and walked off. The Eider, in a rage, was about to issue some orders to his assistants, but his wife interfered.

“Let that nice Guardian have his way,” she said. “Besides, you mustn’t excite yourself too much. You know how weak your heart is—and already you are looking very pale.” With this she led him off.

I followed Attarokib until he carried his prisoner into a large public building. He was instructed to take his burden up to the Common department. This was a large room filled with beds. As we entered we saw two officials in white uniforms beating an undressed patient. Attarokib dropped his charge upon an empty bed. leaped upon the officials and parted them from their victim.

“So! You cure people like this!” he said. “I’ve a good mind to take you to prison.”

“It’s not our fault,” protested one of the officials. “The Chief Hospitaller ordered this treatment.”

“Shout for him to come up,” commanded Attarokib.

They shouted, and after a while the Chief Hospitaller entered. Charged by Attarokib with misconduct, he took the Guardian aside, spoke to him quietly, led him to the door, and pressed a yellow paper into his hand. The moment Attarokib received the paper, I saw a froghin embrace him gleefully. At the same moment the Guardian's body fell to the floor, and Attarokib himself stood beside me. He had escaped out of the body just in

time to avoid the froghin tax-collector. I looked again at the Guardian. He was slowly rising from the floor, an expression of surprise upon his features.

"Say, what made you fall down?" the Hospitaller asked.

"Fall down?" the Guardian inquired sleepily. "When did I fall down? And how did I get here? And what's going on here?"

"Why, you just brought a patient in!"

"I brought a patient? No. I did not!"

"And didn't you just take—wait! Give me that!" And the Hospitaller seized the yellow paper from the hand of the bewildered Guardian. "You're insane—that's it. Come here, you two! Seize this mad Guardian, give him a thrashing, and put him in a cell of the violently insane!"

The two assistants seized the Guardian, now nearly insane in fact because he could not understand what was up, and dragged him away.

Attarokib and I left the hospital.

"And now, Sepsafem, the day is almost here. Have you had enough of Zu?"

"Yes and no," I replied. "I'll be glad to say farewell to this Hell—but some things about it are not yet clear."

"What?"

"I am convinced the persons who live here are people from the planets I saw through the canopy of the crystal park."

"You have surmised correctly."

"But I wonder what brings them here. I remember your telling me that you regarded it as a privilege to be granted a term of life on this planet—which you admit is Hell!"

"True enough. Well, what else?"

“I wonder why, how, or whence, or all of them, do the froghins have such power to give riches to or to persecute the Zumen?”

“Very good. Is that all?”

“No. I’m wondering about that monstrous furnace we saw at the core of this planet!”

“Whatever happens henceforth I shall uphold your right to be called the most expert wonderer in the universe, Sepsafem.”

“And you, Attarokib? Shall you take the role of expert solver of mystifications?”

“Not this time, my friend. I wouldn’t think of interfering with such delightful wondering as you exhibit. So wonder on. I am in favor of an immediate return to Niames.”

“I also favor it. But are my questions to remain unanswered?”

“No, don’t worry about that. I have private information that this very day the king of the froghins is going to be in Niames for his annual vacation. I tried to get you an audience with him in his palace, but he avoided us. This time I’ll best him. I know a person whom he visits every time he is in Niames. When he arrives, he’ll find us there. And you can ask the real ruler of the planet all about it! I am sure you will enjoy meeting him.”

“An excellent plan. But do you think he’ll pay any attention to my questions?”

“You don’t know whom we shall have with us. They would shame him into answering if he showed any reluctance. But in fact he’ll be only too glad to talk to you.”

“If you say so—”

“Good. Come, here by the river is a fine place. Grip my girdle and hold on. You may remove your crystal leaves now. Ready?”

The next minute Attarokib rose up in the air at a tremendous speed. Suddenly he seized a white current. In an instant we found ourselves again at the Port of Niames.

CHAPTER NINE
VILLA LONGANIM

I make five friends—The contest of Stars—The rulers of Zu arrive—My stroll with His Majesty—The Emperor proves his point by disappearing—A journey with my friends—The song of the stellarians—Buzion's anecdote of the two goiters—Attarokib and I return alone to Niames.

C1. Niames again! How happy I was to behold once more the magnificent castle at the port and the beautiful scene beyond. The contrast with the drab ugliness of Zu is indescribable.

We were greeted ceremoniously and made welcome by the officials of the port, among them my former acquaintance Napradsaca. With him I spoke a few minutes and I did not neglect the opportunity to tell him how much I appreciated his happy choice of Attarokib for my guide.

"Before we go any further," said Attarokib, "I suggest a bath to cleanse us from the filth we encountered on Zu."

In fact the unpleasant effects of that eventful visit to the dusty planet had not yet wholly disappeared. I therefore took my guide's suggestion gladly. Beneath a flowery archway of the castle ran an odoriferous, silvery stream of sparkling light. We stripped off our girdles

and plunged deep into the Niamesian pool. Never had I enjoyed swimming so much or in such pleasant circumstances. Reluctantly I left the stream and donned my precious girdle at Attarokib's behest.

"The day is already an hour advanced," he said. "We must not lose time if we are to surprise the ruler of Zu. I have had Napradsaca prepare our host for our visit."

"Where are we going, Attarokib?"

"To Villa Longanim. I predict an enjoyable day for you. And at night—we shall go to a land where you are expected. You have a debt to discharge there."

"What land, and what debt?"

"In good time. For the present we're off for Villa Longanim."

A few minutes of swift flying by the power of the blue flighters brought us to our destination. Situated loftily on a cliff overhanging a scented river

of mixed alabaster and blue was Villa Longanim. Colored a beautiful shade of green, very soothing to the sight, the manor was an architectural gem. Around it stood a circle of stately palms, and these were the innermost trees in a large orchard, surrounding the whole villa, where flourished a hundred varieties of familiar and strange fruit-yielding trees. It will be understood that their consistency was of Isacsimol, the common Niamesian substance that Earthmen with flesh eyes would look right through without seeing anything. To me, in my declayed condition, they were as real as any material tree to my reader. And because my senses were naked, and because the trees themselves were of cultivation superior to our best on Earth, it may be imagined that I was nearly intoxicated with the delicious fruitish perfumes that pervaded the whole orchard and mixed with the incense of the river below.

In a clearing amidst this arboreal paradise stood a large round table of a yellow-green substance, around which a number of armchairs of a silky wood-like constituency were placed. These, I was soon to learn, adapt themselves to the form of whoever occupies them as if they were made of a soft wax.

Five handsome Niamesians were seated at one of these tables, when we arrived, playing at Stars. My guide presented me to each in turn. They were Longanim, our host, Temanion, Shuhion, Naamation, and Bunion. In welcoming us, Longanim said that they were momentarily expecting Emperor Apollyon of Zu with his Empress. We were invited to join in the contest of Stars which was just beginning. But though I understood the play immediately I declined, preferring to watch them at play. Attarokib entered the gay contest, the progress of which fascinated me during almost an hour.

Each player had a number of balls (Stars) of various sizes, no two players using the same color of Stars. Seven and a half feet over the center of the table was a single large Midstar, which stayed there, unsupported, without moving. The players, by turns, set one of their Stars in motion around the Midstar, winding it up so that it will follow some definite orbit of his choosing. When each player has in rotation one Star they take turns, in a different order, in setting in motion a second; then a third, a fourth, a fifth, a sixth and more if there are more players. The sizes of the Stars vary from one inch to three inches in diameter. Each Star is given a different orbit and speed, which the players select and plan according to those

chosen by their predecessors. But the orbits are limited by the circumference of the table (which is fifteen feet in diameter), by its surface, and

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by a marked height seven and a half feet above the Midstar.

The object of the game is to see who can play his Stars so as to suffer the least number of eclipses within a limited period of time; but if ever a collision occurs the player whose Star was at fault is disqualified. The ingenious little Stars automatically record when they are eclipsed, so that at the end of a complete game it is easy to determine the winner. But this is only a check against errors in computation. Actually the players know in advance when the eclipses, which are few, will occur. I saw Shuhion set his last Star to rotate in such a cleverly planned orbit that it should be eclipsed once itself, yet eclipse one or two Stars of each of the other players; and those who followed him could not upset his calculations, for to have tried to eclipse his Stars would have meant more eclipses of their own! Indeed it was by this master stroke that Shuhion won the day's play, having suffered only this one eclipse whilst his nearest opponent had three.

He was warmly congratulated by all his friends and by myself as well. The losers had each to forfeit to the winner one trip which they had a right to make to some constellation. I learned that this meant hardly anything to them because each had more voyage-rights than I could count; and the penalties kept changing hands as it was. But they liked to maintain the formality of paying the winner; which they did good naturedly, with much humor and threats to recover the forfeit on another occasion, simply by saying "You shall have it." When it was Longanim's turn to pay he added, with a sparkle of merriment in his eyes, "God gave, and God has taken away; blessed be the name of God."

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"It is an old saying of the poets of the Longanimian school," remarked Attarokib to me.

C2. We were yet discussing the various moves of the game just closed—or rather I was interestedly hearing their discussion of it, all the

intercommunication being conducted freely—when the expected guests arrived. Their Majesties soared right through the entrance and over to the table at which we were seated, leaving a train of attendants outside. How changed was their appearance! They looked now like handsome, kindly young princes gaily and richly decked. I recognized them by their eyes—the same frightful, colorless orbs that I had seen in the underground of Zu.

"Apollyon to Longanim: Longanim, O admirable friend Longanim! My compliments to you and to your guests. Her Majesty and I are happy to behold you, Masters."

"Longanim to Apollyon: Whence come you?"

"Apollyon to Longanim: From going to and fro in Zu, and from walking up and down in it."

"Apollyon to All: Yes, isn't it dreadful how he is kept busy with his duties?"

"Attarokib to Apollyon: Dreadful hardly does him justice—and he so famed for his intense devotion to his duties."

Suddenly the Emperor's eyes were turned directly upon me.

"Apollyon to Sepsafem: And so here you are! Well, well, well! Be greeted, fugitive. Let just Apollyon credit you with a great accomplishment—since you have succeeded in spying me out in my own realm. Few have done it."

I determined to follow the frank manner of the company with Their Majesties.

"Sepsafem to Apollyon: Pardon me, O Emperor of the planet Zu, if I decline to receive any credit from you. I should hate in any way to become your debtor—you have such efficient collectors of your dues!"

His Majesty smiled slyly whilst my companions laughed in appreciation of the retort.

"Longanim to Sepsafem: Well said! Give the devil his due. I like to hear one reply to the point."

"Apollyon to Longanim: Allow me for once to join in your glee, friend. Your words drip with wisdom, as that irrepressible Attarokib was about to say. And what more in the universe do I want? Behold! you know it. I desire only fairness and equity among the Zumen. Have I ever cheated them? Don't I treat them well, considering that they make free with my planet as if it were their own?"

“Longanim to Apollyon: How oratorical you grow at times, dear Emperor! But you know these claims of yours are of no interest to any of us except my guest Sepsafem. Why tell this to me? Why not be frank and address him whom you wish to convince?”

“Apollyon to Longanim: You are still trying to discredit me, eh? It is your old grudge against me. Why can’t you forget it? You know I have forgiven you for all those ancient affairs of ours—yes, wholeheartedly forgiven them!”

“Apollyon to Attarokib: That’s just like his adorable character—so forgiving!”

“Attarokib to Apollyon: Then I may hope he will forgive me for taking Sepsafem to your admirable kingdom?”

“Apollyon to Attarokib: Why should I have to forgive you? I am very glad you came and brought an intelligent and, I hope, unprejudiced observer.”

“Sepsafem to Apollyon: O Emperor! How can I remain unprejudiced when your kingdom strives so hard to hide its secrets? This seems suspicious.”

“Apollyon to Sepsafem: If you came away from Zu mystified by anything, it is the fault of your guide alone that he did not show you everything—Nay, Attarokib, do not protest that you overlooked anything, for we know of old how thoroughly you can pry into all things. As for your doubts, friend Sepsafem, to show you how well disposed I am towards you, I shall myself undertake to answer any questions you have concerning Zu!”

“Apollyon to Attarokib: See? It is as I have told you—he is so witty and so noble!”

“Sepsafem to Apollyon: Thank you, I shall take advantage of your kind offer. May I know what is the purpose of the great furnace at the core of your planet?”

“Apollyon to Sepsafem: Why need we discuss that in the presence of all our friends? They are well informed on this matter and cannot be interested, as our host has suggested. Let us leave them to amuse themselves. We two will walk together through this delightful orchard and I will explain it.”

“Sepsafem to Apollyon: Your Majesty is very kind. If our friends will excuse us—, Shall we take this lane? What a beautiful place for a stroll! And now will Your Majesty explain what that natural furnace is for?”

“Apollyon to Sepsafem: To supply the planet with life, my friend, to supply it with life. What do you suppose—that an angel causes herbs to grow and Zumen

to be born, and animals, and all their requirements? No, it’s heat! Natural heat, which comes from the furnace at the core of the planet.”

“Sepsafem to Apollyon: But really, Your Majesty, I had rather thought that animate life is something mysterious which cannot be generated out of mere heat, something that requires a higher power to create, something at any rate, not quite so simple as you say, something that might be termed spiritual—”

“Apollyon to Sepsafem: How charmingly naive! You talk like certain deluded Zumen who have invented for themselves a soul, and a stupid afterlife that no one in his right mind would care to live. Surely you can’t be one of their school? Why, you must have observed how all the planet Zu is constituted of certain material substances, for whose existence no proof is necessary, and that these materials grow animate for awhile, and reproduce themselves, and then fall apart, and repeat the process on and on with no outside assistance. The only thing they need is a little inner heat—supplied by the furnace you have seen—to bring them to life as steam makes an engine to live.”

“Sepsafem to Apollyon: Your Majesty’s logic is irrefutable, but unfortunately it doesn’t accord with the fact that I am now in Niames, and discussing with Your Majesty, and we are surrounded at this moment with a million proofs that there does exist a different life than on your planet. And wasn’t I on your planet in a different form than your Zumen, and did I not enter their bodies, and—”

“Apollyon to Sepsafem: Hold, now, what’s the use of your going on with this delusion? The fact is that you are only dreaming all this. You are a Zuman yourself

and, being asleep, you are enjoying a very pleasant dream! There’s no reality in any of this!”

“Sepsafem to Apollyon: I grant the possibility that this is a dream—since it is all so strange—though I have had numerous proofs that it is a reality. But the two taxes which Your Majesty imposes on the planet Zu—

your rewarding those who surrender their conscience, and persecution of those who refuse to wrong their fellows—this does not seem at all dreamlike to me."

"Apollyon to Sepsafem: Just another fanciful part of your dream, which really bears out better what I said before. The truth of the matter is that those who take what they wish have the best enjoyment possible, while those who foolishly limit themselves with a trillion don'ts get nothing, and it's their own fault if they are miserable. The idea that I tax the Zumen is sheer nonsense. I don't even exist—you are only imagining me in your dream. You are dreaming that you are in Niames, that you have a guide Attarokib, that you are on a visit to a Villa Longanim, and that there are stellarian people. None of these exists. There is only such matter as you are accustomed to when awake on Zu. Soon all these things will disappear from around you, and then you will be convinced of the truth of my statements. And the first proof will be that I will vanish before your very eyes."

The next instant Apollyon was really gone!

Rather uneasy at this sudden turn of events, I hastened back to my company of friends. A glance indicated that Her Majesty had left, but the company did not seem grieved over the loss, for they were laughing heartily.

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: I say, my friend. I warned you you would never make a good courtier. Apollyon left a moment ago saying she had received a message from her royal consort that he was called suddenly away—but

we have reason to believe you may have been the cause of his departure. Have you been doubting his statements?"

I repeated my conversation with Apollyon and told of his unexpected departure. My last words were greeted with a burst of laughter.

"Longanim to All: That is Apollyon—the noble Emperor of Zu! The master of fabrication! The last time he explained it, I believe, the furnace supplied the motive power to fly the planet around the sun! His proof is ingenious, but if ever you put him in a tight place he has one irrefutable argument—he disappears!"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: And so you are dreaming! And I am a product of your imagination!"

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Indeed, it is all a dream. But what a superb dream, and how peculiarly marked by something not very common to dreams—consistency!”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: What? you still doubt that you are dreaming? O, what a skeptic! I am tempted to prove that you are dreaming by disappearing immediately!” And he placed his hand upon his girdle.

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: No, don’t prove it that way—unless we can all disappear together. I am in favor of continuing this dream as long as possible.”

“Temanion to All: That is a good suggestion—let us all disappear somewhere, to a place where our friend Sepsafem can learn something about his dream.”

“Buzion to All: That suits me. We can go to one of the planets.”

“Longanim to All: A trip then, since it meets with everyone’s approval. And I shall be greatly surprised if friend Sepsafem does not discover shortly a different set

of solutions to the problems that Apollyon solved by vanishing.”

C3. In another minute we had gripped our girdles and were speeding on high. Villa Longanim and Niames were quickly left far behind. The atmosphere through which we flew was beautifully alight, warm, fragrant, and filled with sweet music when we chose to hear it. We kept close and carried on a lively conversation about a thousand and one matters, Longanim and his friends pressing me all the time to tell about my recent adventures on Zu, which amused them greatly. We had formed ourselves in a semicircle. At my right was Attarokib, and next to him Naamation and Buzion. At my left was Longanim; next to him, Temanion and Shuhion. Our conversation was interspersed with many amusing anecdotes contributed by my companions, all of whom I found to be admirable raconteurs. One of the most interesting tales was related by Longanim when I happened to mention again Apollyon’s assertion that there was no Creator.

“Longanim to All: This reminds me of numerous occasions when I took the same position, and I had no reason to regret it later.”

“Sepsafem to Longanim: It sounds interesting—you in harmony with Apollyon.”

“Longanim to Sepsafem: Why, that isn’t all of it. I had a very pious neighbor—this was when I lived in Zu myself—who used to dispute with me on those occasions, insisting that there is a God; and can you guess the result? He was severely reproved for it later in Niames!”

“Sepsafem to Longanim: What is it? One of Apollyon’s pleasant dreams?”

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“Longanim to Sepsafem: Say one of his nightmares. I’ll tell you how it happened.

“My neighbor and I were both quite rich, so that poor people came every day to request alms at our doors. It was my custom to give liberally to all who wanted help. My neighbor was tight fisted. Because my conduct reflected badly upon him, he used to try to induce me to be like himself, and his best argument was that no one has a right to diminish the punishment of those whom God has afflicted with poverty. As I had not Apollyon’s ability to disappear in refutation of an excellent argument, I was wont to reply that when I see the misery of a poor fellow it seems to me that there is no God to help him, therefore I, who have plenty, may do so—for there can be no affront to a non-existing Deity.

“Day after day we disputed this matter. My neighbor saw in every person’s affliction the hand of the existing God, while I maintained that I could help the suffering in spite of God or because there was no God. And you have seen part of the result yourself. The Villa that we left a while ago was presented to me because I persisted in denying that there was a God. As for my neighbor, I met him one day, long ago, in the Hall of Decisions, where he confessed to me that he had had the wrong side of the argument!”

While Longanim was concluding this pleasant anecdote, I had begun to feel a sharp change in the atmosphere. When he paused, I mentioned this to my companions.

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: We have all perceived it. This is the effect produced by our entry into the atmosphere of one of the planets.”

“Sepsafem to All: Shall we be upon the planet soon?”

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“Attarokib to All: I hear some very delightful singing, and yonder comes the troup of musicians. They seem to be leaving this planet. I think we should follow them and hear their song.”

His suggestion was unanimously approved. Soon we were flying a few miles behind the troup of stellarian travelers. I opened my hearing to receive their song. There was no sound, and there were no words, but there was music, sweet, full of meaning that entered the under standing. And the content of their song was plainer than if they had recited a poem of words set to music. This was the real language of music.

More than two hundred were in the troup. As I approached, one chorus was singing of the stellarian life, of its happiness. Then their mood changed, and their music complained how for one reason they were not content—for being unable to visit the peoples of other stars and see the individual wonders of each star in the universe which they could not do because the peoples of the different stars were constituted of different elements that repelled one another unless they were prepared for meeting on neutral soil. Then again their mood changed, and they sang in praise of their Creator's permission to go and be born upon the neutral planet Zu, there to meet the peoples of all the stars and by friendly mingling to overcome the primal antipathy of their differing elements.

Another chorus, making music low and hopeful, took up the song. Their song told that the stellarians were all of one mold, incapable of doing anything but what their innocent natures loved; and how they wished to be individuals, each one with a personal will and a character of his own, and a power to understand and choose between things of contradictory nature. They

sang of their prayers to be permitted to meet the people of other stars to develope by this contact their personality and character; and of their happiness that they were permitted to go to Niames in preparation of being born on Zu where wondrous sever trials were in store that they would overcome and thereby develope their individuality.

A third chorus took up the song, now sad and filled with foreboding. They sang of the need of relinquishing the memories of their past before they were born in Zu, so that they would have freedom to exercise their will and develope themselves individually; and of dangers that lurked in the shadows of Zu; of its ruler who would strive to profit from their use of his planet by stealing the light of their ego's soul, and to detain them on the planet, forcing them to return to it again and again to balance their accounts upon it; and of how this same ruler would deceive them by conditions that

would make them hate their fellows from other stars, instead of fraternnizing with them.

Then the first chorus resumed in a hopeful vein and sang of those who had come forth victorious from Zu, and were able to visit many stars of the universe, and brought back wondrous reports of the distinctive marvels that each one contained; and how they were prepared to brave all the dangers of Zu to achieve the right of the freedom of the universe.

Then the second chorus resumed and sang of the greatness of those who come forth from Zu with their personality individually interesting and admirable. And the third chorus joined with a consolation that even those who failed would be free at the end of six days of the universe, when the ruler of Zu himself would destroy his planet by causing its waters and its lands to

change their places; and later they would have another opportunity until the end of another six days.

Finally all three choruses joined together in a great song of hope that their coming adventures in Zu would end with success.

We did not follow them when they left the atmosphere of their planet, flying swiftly towards Niames.

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: You have heard this song of the stellarians. What is there yet that you do not know about Zu?”

“Sepsafem to All: Much that has been mysterious is clear to me. I understand why the stellarians desire to go to Zu. But I wonder whether it is really necessary that the planet should be so arranged that the stellarians, born innocent and without memory of their past, should be practically at once in the hands of the underground hegemony?”

“Longanim to Sepsafem: I will explain it to you.”

“Attarokib to Longanim: Pardon me, friend. I know your explanation. Six days will scarcely be enough to go into it thoroughly—and Sepsafem is due in Mikahes within an hour to discharge a debt there. Allow me to give him an answer that will take a moment only, but will last him a lifetime.”

“Longanim to Attarokib: If he must leave us so soon, I will yield to you. What answer will you offer him?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: This: How else would you arrange the planet Zu so that the stellarians may develope their personality in the manner they desire?”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: That is to say, you think it is best arranged as now for its purpose? Probably so, but since you have suggested it, perhaps I shall spend a lifetime trying to invent a better arrangement.”

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“Attarokib to Sepsafem: I don’t wonder that you will try—I am informed that you have already tried your hand at invention of a different sort.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: I’ll confess then that I don’t expect any greater success in this effort.”

“Attarokib to Longanim: Where are you taking your guests now?”

“Longanim to Attarokib: We are all going for a visit to this planet, aren’t we?”

“Attarokib to Longanim: I am afraid I shall have to deprive friend Sepsafem of this pleasure. The fact is we have hardly any time to spare, since we are expected in Mikahes with the night.”

C4. The company, as much as myself, were annoyed that we would have to part so soon. At Temanion’s suggestion, the five friends accompanied Attarokib and myself part of the way back to Niames. Again our conversation turned to Zu and Apollyon, this time merrier than ever. The Niamesians permitted nothing to distress them. A dozen delightful anecdotes were told that I treasured in my mind, but one, that illustrated the manner in which the thing called fate, or luck, operates for the Zumen, merits retelling. Bunion contributed it.

“Buzion to All: Once, it was several thousand years ago, when I sat in the park of crystal observing a friend of mine upon the planet Zu in whose adventures I was interested, I saw a remarkable thing happen to him.

“My friend was a poor man—which, as a general rule, may be understood to mean that he was no friend of the hegemony. On this particular day of my observations I sighted him just as he was leaving the house of a doctor. The cause of his visit was readily apparent in

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the shape of a heavy goiter upon his neck. Only a step behind him came another patient of the healer, similarly afflicted with a goiter; but his garments indicated that he belonged to the class of magnates.

“Because my friend walked very slowly, the magnate was at his side before they had reached the bottom of the steps leading out of the doctor’s house.

“ ‘I say,’ remarked the magnate, ‘how did you get your goiter? The doctor says I got mine from eating too much—but where did you get so much food? You look poor!’

“ ‘You at least know how you got your load of trouble’ replied the other, ”but the doctors won’t bother with such poor men as I.’

“ ‘What difference does it make whether or not he tells you how you got your goiter? He can’t cure you, since he can’t cure me with all my riches.’

“ ‘The two continued to discuss this matter, and their sickness, and their symptoms, each one arguing that he was the most afflicted person in the land. Suddenly the magnate remarked—

“ ‘I say, see where you have taken me—we are out of the city and in a field, and I am very tired with the long walk.’

“ ‘I am sorry for you’ his companion replied, ’but I have come here to seek wild berries to still my hunger.’

“ ‘Well, go and hunt for berries. As for me, I go no further. Here under this tree will I rest.’

“The poor man left, and the magnate, reclining under the shade of a great tree, soon fell asleep. A few minutes later I noticed a band of froghins approaching. They were dancing and shouting and playing upon many instruments. Suddenly one of them said—

“ Do you know, my friends, our celebration is not perfect.’

“ ‘Why? ’another asked.

“ ‘Because we lack one instrument to have a complete band—we lack a drum!’

“ ‘It is so’ they all shouted.

“ ‘But wait!’ cried the first froghin, ‘I have it—there is our drum!’ and he pointed to the sleeping magnate. ‘We will take that round thing from his neck and use it for a drum!’

“And suiting action to his words, the froghins removed the magnate’s round goiter and danced on their way, shouting joyously and beating the newly acquired drum. Not long after this the poor man returned, munching unripe berries with many grimaces. A shout of surprise came from his throat as he sighted his recent companion. The latter awakened.

“ ‘Why do you make such a noise?’ he asked.

“ ‘Why, see!’ the poor man exclaimed, ‘your goiter has vanished!’

“But by this time the magnate had become aware of the miraculous occurrence himself and arose with a gleeful countenance. The poor man questioned him to learn how he had been cured, but the magnate insisted it was a miracle, since he had gone to sleep under that tree with his goiter and woke up without it. He ran to the city, to inform his family, leaving the poor man behind. The latter, forced to think that there must be some wonderful healing power in the roots of the tree, determined to go to sleep there himself; and being exhausted from his labors, he was soon in a torpor.

“In time I saw the company of froghins returning. They were no longer dancing or playing.

“ ‘My friends,’ said the leader, ‘You know what our good King has taught us—that we must be honest with the Zumen. Now since our celebration is over, and we no longer need a drum, don’t you think justice requires that we should return it to the Zuman? See—he is yet sleeping there—’

“ ‘Yes! Yes! It is justice!’ they all cried.

“In a moment they had pressed their erstwhile drum upon the neck of the sleeping Zuman and were off. And when my poor friend awoke he found himself begoitered both before and behind!”

“Naamation to All: If it were not necessary for us to part now, I would tell another story of how the froghins reward their friends and punish their enemies. But it is late—”

“Longanim to All: Indeed, it is late. We must turn back now. Farewell Sepsafem. Farewell, Attarokib—take good care of our friend.”

We exchanged friendly thoughts of parting. Longanim, Temanion, Shuhion, Naamation and Buzion turned towards the planet we had recently left while Attarokib and I flew towards Niames.

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: How have you enjoyed your meeting with my friends?”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Wonderfully. I am happy to have had this opportunity.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: And are you satisfied at last with your knowledge of Zu?”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: I believe so. I understand that its people are stellarians whose memory of their past is taken away and who come there for two reasons. First, because in their primitive state they are all of one character having no personality and no will; second, because each stellarian is constituted of the element of

his own planet, which is antipathetic to the elements of the others, so that they cannot visit other stars unless they are prepared for it by fraternization of their different elements upon neutral ground. Zu is arranged so that such fraternization is possible while the stellar ians acquire personality. Am I right?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Yes, indeed.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: But tell me, what is this about Zumen failing and being compelled to return to the planet?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Many Zumen die, that is their Zuian bodies do, while they still owe many debts to the hegemony. They are often required to return and balance those accounts. Sometimes many returns are necessary. Sometimes they desire to return because they failed to make friends with all or many peoples.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Then a stellarian might be bound forever to Zu?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: No—on account of the furnace you saw. At certain periods it grows overheated and vibrates so fearfully that the planet is overturned. Its lands are covered by the oceans, and new lands appear. All the hegemony is destroyed. Only the Emperor and the Empress know how to save themselves, and one Zuman family survives to begin the life of the planet again. It has happened several times already.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: I understand—and here we are in Niames.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Yes, but fly on yonder. We are expected in Mikahes.”

CHAPTER TEN
THE LAND OF BLESSINGS AND CURSES

I pay a debt by sorting flowers—The laborers of Mikahes—The seething cauldrons—I undertake to send a message to Earth—the Signalling station—My mission at the Palace of Birth Control—I complete my work—Departure from Mikahes.

C1. I noticed that we were going more up than forward, rising higher, higher, until at last we paused in front of a great gateway. Glancing in curiously I was impressed with a special quality of light which distinguished this place from others. It was all of one very fine blue shade. Even the ethery ground was of the same exquisite tincture. It resembled very nearly the blueness of an African sky on a perfectly clear day at noontime.

A tall guardian of the gateway, resplendant in blue raiment, gracefully bowed us in. Once inside I beheld the great manufacturing and industrial center of Niames. It was a world complete in itself. Attarokib had told me that Mikahes was a little continent, but he had had Niamesian proportions in mind. The area of the land I judged to be more than a hundred times larger than all the continents of Earth and its oceans together. And from the entrance to its center, extending in an inner

half circle, about one tenth the area of Mikahes is given over exclusively to the industrial activities.

Answering a signal of the blue guardian, a smiling official approached and greeted us.

"Attarokib to Namehem: Greetings. I see you were informed immediately of our arrival. Here is my friend Sepsafem who is bursting with anxiety to know for what particular purpose I have brought him to this center of industries."

"Namehem to Sepsafem: Welcome to Mikahes, friend Sepsafem. You are here on account of a debt you contracted in the park of Sibbatmikah. It is the law of Niames that those who consume Anozam here must pay for it. The inhabitants of our land pay for each day's Anozam with an hour's work. You are indebted to us to that extent, and an hour's labor on your part will enable us to balance the account. Moreover, if you intend to have any

more Anozam in Niames it is your privilege to work in advance to pay for it—the same privilege that all the inhabitants of Mikahes enjoy."

"Sepsafem to Namehem: This debt is not as great as I had supposed. If you will find a suitable occupation for me, I shall be glad to spend an hour at it."

"Namehem to Attarokib: What work would you suggest for our friend?"

"Attarokib to Namehem: He will appreciate a varied assignment."

"Namehem to Sepsafem: Come, then, I am going to put you to sorting flowers."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: And you?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: I will keep you company."

The official led us into one of the departments nearby. It was an area tens of thousands of miles square,

filled with row after even row of snow white tables at each of which several persons presided sorting an endless stream of the most gorgeous flowers I had ever beheld. Deftly the workers handled the flowers, which came up through openings in the ground from a department below, and quickly despatched them into channels leading to other departments above.

As I took my place at one of the tables I was welcomed by greetings from the workers at my table and from those around me. In a few minutes I was fully instructed as to my duties, which I began at once. Every flower that was sent up to my table I carefully examined, determined its nature, and forwarded it to the proper department above.

When I recalled the nut-shell packing on Zu I was amused at the contrast. Here was no labor to fatigue the senses. Not only were the flowers often very beautiful and fragrant but each one was individually interesting, and had to be understood before it could be forwarded. The manner of understanding them was no new surprise to me, for I recalled having understood the meaning of the objects in the air on the island of Nimikahara when I focused my mind upon them. The flowers that I sorted in Mikahes were of the same character. As I read and distributed them into the various channels I found that they represented the thoughts and emotions of countless beings in all parts of the universe, expressed in all languages and manners of utterance.

Some of the flowers that I handled were the replicas of prayers—formal pleas by humans for divine assistance, and spontaneous utterances of praise

or appeal. Others were the replicas of the roaring of lions upon their prey—and the buying of houseflys in a bowl of sugar. There were representations of the thunderous blasts of

storm winds—and of the flutter of falling leaves in autumn. There were replicas of the angry dash of ocean breakers—and of the shrill sweet hymn of country crickets. No element, no creature in the universe, but gives birth, by its sounds and motions and thoughts, to such flowers as were cast up on my table and sent on by me to departments representing each type of expression.

It was fascinating work. In reading these flowers I could see what was happening in many places in the universe, the Earth included. I did not understand, however, for what purpose the flowery replicas were collected in Mikahes, or what was done with them in the upper departments. My guide was not far away, chatting with some of the workers. When he approached my table I questioned him.

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: I am going to have you transferred, after a while, to a different department—where you may learn more about the industries of Mikahes. But to satiate your curiosity I will tell you this much. These flowers are the raw material out of which is made the Anozam that supports all forms of life in the universe."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Stay awhile. You say so much in a few words! Help me to understand it. I have consumed Anozam in Sibbatmikah myself, and I have seen another form of it consumed in Aimedrat. Where else is used, and how, and what is the manner of its distribution?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: You accuse me of saying much in a few words! Why, you can ask twice as much in fewer words! Do you realize what you have asked me to explain?"

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Nothing that's prohibited to me to know, I hope?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: A great secret, at any rate—the secret of life!"

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Well, you surely don't expect to dampen my curiosity with that statement?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: No, but neither do I expect to satiate it fully in a moment. I will tell you this much, though—that all these expressions of

various forms of life are made into forces that, when returned to the places of their origin, promote the form of life which they represent."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: The rushing of ocean waves—"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Exactly—they give birth to replicas which you assort here. In the department above they are transformed into forces that will cause the ocean waves to continue their rushing."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: A form of self-reproduction, would you say?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: You have struck on the very truth. All forms of life so reproduce themselves. The stuff that enables them to live is Anozam —made in Mikahes out of their own expressions of their life!"

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: And a human's thought of the desire to eat, or his plea for food, or his motions in laboring for bread—"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Yes, yes! Each gives birth to replicas—you have handled them here. The replica of a phrase is twice as much as that of a thought, and the replica of a deed—twice the replica of a word. These are the replicas out of which is made the force that causes food to grow, in its various forms."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Is every creature given as much Anozam as it caused to be made—say on the planet Zu?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: No. The total of its Anozam is returned to certain large localities. Its immediate distribution there depends on various circumstances . I know just what you are thinking of—that the workzumns, who actually do most for the production of the Anozam that causes the Zuian soil to be fruitful, get the least part of it; while those who do least get most of its fruit. Remember, though, that a person's life is not measured by the time he spends upon Zu. An individual may be wronged there, where the conditions are purposefully arranged so that wrongdoing may be possible. But elsewhere—in Niames—the accounts are ultimately balanced?'

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: You had better explain how that is possible. Specifically, I wish to know how and where I can be recompensed for the Anozam I produced in shoveling coal upon Zu—the direct benefits of which, it seems to me, will be gathered by the owner of the coal."

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: There are several types of Anozam. A worker on Zu produces three kinds-at his labor, by means of the three agents concerned. First, by means of the divine gift of powers to think, speak, and

do. This Anozam belongs not to the individual but to the universe at large; it is therefore held in the park of Aiahatnig equally for all persons, but sometimes is assigned to others by individuals who cannot themselves claim it. This is the best quality of Anozam, incidentally. The second is by means of the will of the ego person to use these powers. This type is returned to the ego in Aimedrat and wherever else egoes are in want of it. It is inferior in quality to the other, but excellent nevertheless. The third and really inferior quality of Anozam is produced by means of the cooperation of

the clayen body. But since, as in your coal shoveling, the body that labored will not receive the benefits of the Anozam produced, the person who does receive that inferior Anozam will have to repay a like quantity out of his share of superior Anozam to the owner of that body."

C2. In the midst of this conversation I was transferred to a different department. The work was the same—assorting the replicas of the expressions of various forms of life. But the nature of these expressions were different here, and the forces made of them were not Anozam, for this is not the sole product of Mikahes. I was not long in learning that every deed, word, or thought, gives birth to more replicas than one. The first is disposed of in the Department of Anozam. The rest are drawn into various other departments, where they are sorted, filed away, or treated in some manner suitable to their character. A tear shed in despair, a hope concealed in the heart, a sigh whispered unconsciously, and a curse uttered in anger—all find record through their replicas, all are turned to practical account. Nothing that ever comes into being in the universe is ever lost. Thoughts become the seed out of which great things are made to grow by the mysterious processes of Mikahes.

In my second working place I gathered up the multitudinous replicas of a single thought that was in the mind of thousands of people in one of the European lands. It was easy for me to read these replicas. They revealed a feeling of hatred for the ruler and the ruling class of that land. Next to these replicas my neighbors were placing others revealing the hopes of masses of persons in the same land for the violent overthrow of

the iniquitous regime. Each group was placed into a scarlet cauldron seething as if it would burst. I helped to prepare these cauldrons, and I was told that later on we would tint in them souls preparing to go to Earth who, thus treated, would be able to give expression to these hatreds and hopes!

I paused in my work to reflect on this wonder. Even the hopes of humans in any place are turned to account, and when they accumulate they must be realized! I thought to myself: If mankind has hoped and thought so long to fly in the air like birds, and to live under water like fishes, shall they not do so one day—when enough replicas of these thoughts and hopes have been gathered in Mikahes to tint the souls of Earthmen destined for the fulfillment of these hopes? If the bitter feelings of a land against its oppressors are multiplied, shall not a flaming soul be born to bring about a revolution? If the tears and sighs of a people against a general evil overflow the cup, shall not idealists be inspired to abolish it? If the agonized murmurings of the sick go up increasingly, shall not a great doctor be born to discover for them a remedy?

The seething couldrons were ready. A group was organized to go and bring the souls to be tinted in them. To Attarokib, who was nearby, I expressed my wish to accompany the recruiting party. He, in turn, communicated my desire to one of the group making ready to depart. The latter declared that he would be glad to change places with me if I would do something for him which he had meant to do on his way to the Palace of Birth Control. I consented, and my fellow-worker instructed me to go to the Signalling Station and send forth a message to a relative of his.

I was doubly glad to do this for him, since it would mean an opportunity to see another of the departments of Mikahes. We changed places as soon as the departing group was ready. With a sign of farewell to our fellow workers we flew out of the department towards the Palace of Birth Control, where the souls we wanted would be waiting for assignment. Flying thus I questioned several of my companions concerning the conditions of their labor. I learned that they were all inhabitants of Mikahes working for their daily supply of personal Anozam.

They informed me that, by choice, they worked always in advance for their sustenance. Six hours of work earned them a week’s supply of

Anozam. By working steadily for a few weeks, they completed a year's labor. The rest of the time was their own, to spend in an unending variety of interesting doings. Many of them, however, work as much as one third of the year, so that their vacation is only eight months long. The Anozam earned in this extra work, which they cannot consume themselves, they send to certain of their relatives on Earth, or to people to whom they owe debts on Earth! From this I made sure that the Mikahesians are former Earthmen—something I had suspected before.

The work for their own Anozam is compulsory. Every Mikahesian must do an hour of work for each day's sustenance. But he may choose his own time to do it in, and begin and quit his work when he pleases. There is thus no feeling of slavery attached to their work. The extra labor that most of them perform is chiefly voluntary and is limited to a maximum of three months a year for each person.

In the midst of my discussion Attarokib informed me that we were just passing the Signalling Station. I

left my companions, promising to rejoin them at the Palace of Birth Control, and followed Attarokib. He led me to a sort of cave in the bottom of the land.

C3. The Signalling Station was filled with thousands of Mikahesians, standing before many concave discs, receiving and despatching a multitude of incoming and outgoing messages by means of special carrier currents. The persons in attendance here were egoes, like those who had worked with me in the department of Anozam. But many of them, I noticed, varied in the brightness of their forms. Since the messages they were issuing were sent freely in the language of thought, I could understand them all. They were of two kinds—messages to private individuals upon Earth, and messages issued generally, for all who would receive them. The private messages, I soon perceived, were chiefly warnings against forthcoming misfortunes, or advice concerning one manner or other of conduct, to kin and friends. There was quite a number of messages being signaled by proxy for recently deceased people concerning the disposal of their property, for which they had not properly divided. One person was telling of valuables he had cached where the heirs were unlikely to find them. One was signalling of debts owed him of which he had left no record. One was

instructing his heirs to pay debts he owed, the clearing of which now meant a great deal to him.

The general messages were of an official character, and intended for a wide audience. There were warnings to nations, and to inhabitants of smaller localities, of threatening troubles; and instruction how they might be avoided. There was advice against or in favor of the enactment of proposed legislation, or the investiture of

certain officials. There were protests by groups of certain nationalities against the conduct of their fellow-nationals on Earth with strangers within and outside their borders. There were also lectures by noted Mikahesians upon a countless variety of subjects, including religion, philosophy, and science, intended for any on Earth who might receive them. There were prophetic lectures foretelling future wars and future weather; scientific lectures on astronomy and shoe repairing; and, what amused and astonished me, lectures on how to be an efficient criminal, or a successful policeman. Every imaginable sort of knowledge was being sent out through the concave discs, giving the Earthmen a very wide choice indeed of the subjects they could receive.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: In the name of all that's reasonable, good friend, what is this advice being sent out on how to manufacture a new instrument for prying open private strong-boxes?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: You inveterate reformer—will you teach us now what we may teach your fellows on Earth?"

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: But is this a fit thing to teach the Earthmen from Mikahes? Don't you think our burglars know their business well enough?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: And Apollyon hoped you would be an impartial observer! You are much too prejudiced, my friend, in favor of the things called good. Life is sent forth from Mikahes to the lamb, and to the lion who seeks to rend the lamb. Every creature on Earth must select for itself the qualities of its own life, and the choice is wide indeed. But as for this unfitting instruction, as you term it, why nothing is really issued from here that did not come up in its raw form from Earth. The desire and the planning for that instrument

have long since existed in one or several human minds."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Yes, that accords with what I have already seen at my work. Now tell me, what happens to all these private messages being issued here? I do not know of the people on Earth receiving messages from those who have died there—unless it be through certain practitioners who call themselves variously Clairvoyants, Spiritists, Table-turners, Middlers, and such, and proclaim their ability to communicate with the dead. But in all my knowledge of them I have never heard of one who received any but the most inane and worthless communications from the departed spirits."

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: I am glad you were not taken in. What a notion! A Middler for receiving a private message from Niames! What could be more ridiculous? These private communications are always directed toward the persons for whom they are intended. You can see how impossible it would be for anyone to intercept them even if the persons for whom they are intended fail to receive them. Now it is a fact that very few people ever receive fully or clearly the messages sent to them from this Signalling Station. But this is due to a defect in the apparatus of their own perception. No one, however, can intercept another's private message. It is out of the range of possibility."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: And what of the more general messages?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: These official communications are much more easily received, and by anyone, being issued freely. But each individual receives usually what he desires most, being to that best attuned. A man who devotes himself to the science of chemistry, or to some special branch of it, will in time attune his perception to receive knowledge related with that subject.

So with a man who devotes himself to the business of stealing."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Small wonder that I had to work so many years before I developed a flying idea that promised to be successful—and at that it was hardly what I had hoped. And I think I understand now why people who are geniuses in one field are often ignoramuses in another. Is it not because they are superlatively attuned to receive messages concerning a particular subject and very dull when it comes to another?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Yes. A person might be able to receive with facility astronomical knowledge of an order beyond the comprehension of all but a very few of his fellowmen, and yet be unable to receive simple

messages dealing with the moral emotions of masses of people. Most people receive certain things better than others. Indeed, it may be impossible for one who is in some branch of knowledge a genius to understand something which is plain to millions of his fellow beings."

We had been walking around the Signalling Station as we conversed, the issuing discs being in use. During Attarokib's last communication we came upon one that was free. I now prepared to send to Earth the message I had for the relative of my fellow worker—someone by the name of John Langley, the son of Peter and Beatrice, whom I was to warn that earnest troubles were brewing for him in the matter in which he was now engaged and that he could avoid them by discretion and kindness whilst rashness and harsh action would end in disaster for him. A glance into the disc revealed two levers controlling two currents—one white and the other blue. Attarokib advised me to send my message twice—first by one current and then by the other. I followed his instructions, though not understanding why.

When I had finished, I questioned him about the two currents.

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: We must really make haste to be on time at the Palace of Birth Control. Remember, you have a duty to perform there. But on our way I will explain it to you."

Over the short distance between the Signalling Station and our next stop my guide told me that the two currents carry messages to two separate receiving instruments in the human—the white to the brain, and the blue to the heart. Some things he declared are best understood by the brain, and some by the heart. The message I had sent might be received by either—hence his advice to use both currents.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: You have just touched on something that has always been a puzzle to me. Why is it that people of culture, education, and well-developed brain, are often morally weak, or totally faithless?" "Attarokib to Sepsafem: You have asked something that the two currents of the Signalling Station should help you to understand. Understanding is divided between the two human instruments of perception. Some things can be understood only by the brain—as mathematics; some things by the heart

—as personal morality, religious feeling, idealism. Now if any individual cultivates his brain alone, he may become a great engineer who is beyond caring about such a thing as the sufferings of his fellowmen. If one cultivates his heart alone he may become a noble idealist, but may do more harm than good on account of his ignorance of practical things. An individual's personality depends upon the extent to which he develops both of these instruments of perception. And both should be cultivated."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: A person's failure to cultivate either instrument of perception means, then, that he will be unable to receive the general messages issued from Mikahes to that instrument?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: That is right. And he who neglects heart or brain wholly is in certain respects an idiot, though in others he may be a genius. Well, here we are at the Palace of Birth Control."

C4. We entered a beautiful white building, several dozen stories in height. To an official who asked our wants, I told what I had come for. He directed me to the thirtieth salon. Ascending by a passageway, we passed many salons in which I beheld scenes that excited my curiosity. We stopped in an alcove of the thirtieth salon, where I found my former laboring companions. They informed me that great difficulties were encountered in obtaining the souls they needed. It seemed that I might have to wait a good while for my turn, being the last to come.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Must we wait here? Why not a visit to some of those salons below?"

Attarokib agreed to accompany me. We descended to the salon immediately below, where a large assemblage of egoes were gathered to be assigned to serve a period upon Earth. The procedure was very interesting.

An official produced the images of about one hundred infants' Earthbodies, to each of which was attached all the details connected with its coming birth, including the history of its parentage, the condition of its health, the circumstances in which its parents lived and their attitude towards life, and finally the number of years that the mechanism of the body could function at the utmost. He then requested the egoes present to select at will any

of these bodies to be attached to during their coming Earthlife. The assemblage heard him read all the facts about these infants; then, one after the other, firmly declined to choose any of them.

The Niamesian official did not seem in the least surprised at this impasse. It was his duty to conscript an ego-soul for every baby that was due to be born which was turned over to him for disposal. Evidently he had much experience in the conduct of his office. When the critical examinations were complete, and not a single choice had been recorded, he arose upon a platform and addressed the assemblage in a charming manner, giving them the title of Esteemed Natives of the Unblemished Planets of All the Distant Constellations of the Universe.

"It has been my pleasure," he said, "to introduce to you some hundred future citizens temporary of the planet Earth. From among you must come their persons in the life-in-clay. According to my experience, I consider this lot to be as good as any you are likely to get in the present generation. I advise you to make your choices out of this group and enter upon the Earthly career immediately, for they will be provided with the mechanism of vitality within forty-eight hours. Pray, make your selections now, that I may despatch them as soon as possible. Your waiting, good friends, is in vain. Better than these are hardly to be expected now-a-days. Indeed, there is a point of preference in them, for they are all going to be shortlived. Not one of them will survive on Earth after forty-five Earthly years. A few will hardly reach thirty. Their parents have lived at a fast pace, the products of their bodies are physically weak and unfit. Take then, these for your Earthbodies; and remember, first choices—first assignments, for I haven't enough for half of you. Come, now, who will begin? Here

is a boy! Who will take this boy? Who wants this speciment of contemporary Earthboy?"

Quiet reigned when he paused. Not a motion was made. No one seemed to want the poor boy, or any of the boys and girls in the lot. The recruiting officer who had so bravely attempted to auction his little army seemed hardly put out by the failure of his method. He had apparently not lost hope. He addressed them once more:

"I do not blame you, good stellarians, if you are reluctant to unite yourselves for a period with these unclean-born, wretched bodies. But you know that born you must be. It was your own pleasure to come here for this

purpose. Why discriminate now? Take a blind chance! Who will be the first to risk blindly? Here is a specimen! What is wrong with this one? A fine baby-girl! Thirty-six Earthly years is all she has to go. Who will have her?"

A lady, apparently impressed with the notion of taking a chance, came forward to examine the representation of this infant. But after a close inspection she turned away with a shrug, remarking freely that this girl, in her estimation, was too crude-blooded to be kept under much control, and besides, had another disadvantage—her parents were rich.

The recruiting officer tried again. He spoke and appealed, and humored and coaxed, and even threatened to conscript the necessary number of persons by force. Yet there was not a single ego among them willing to make a choice within this group. I learned, in listening to their discussions and remarks, that their chief objection to the present lot of prospective Earthly bodies was that they were all assigned to be born to city people of the well-to-do classes. They were of the opinion that

under such conditions an ego has a comparatively harder time to turn his or her life into useful channels and end the period of inclayment with a favorable ledger. They preferred to wait for a choice among rural folk, or at least poor city folk, or among people of blood refined by noble pursuits.

More appeals and threats availing not, the official at last proposed a compromise by which the entire company agreed to abide. He brought in an additional lot of future children of farm folk, and honest laborers, and nobly living people of both sexes, and distributed the two groups by a mixed lottery. When all the infants were disposed of, many in the assemblage were yet left without assignment. These were told they would have to wait for another opportunity. The conscriptor, I thought, knew his business. He first tried to press upon them what none of them wanted in order to induce them to risk something in lieu of a real choice.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: As usual—"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: You have one or twelve questions to ask—"

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: The first of which is—"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Why are the egoes so particular in choosing since, according to your sense of justice, all children must have an equal chance—"

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Yes, an equal chance. Haven't they?"

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Certainly. You know that a child born out of an assault has the same chance in life as one born from—”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Enough. But does not this mean that the children—”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Are punished for the sins of the parents? I’ll tell you—”

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“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Wait. What are you trying to do? Really, you’re depriving me of the pleasure of asking my own questions!”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: For this I shall allow you to deprive me, in turn, of the pleasure of answering—”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Very well. If you think I am so helpless, I will show you I can answer the last question. It is so. The laws of Nature are arranged so that the children must suffer for the sins of the parents. Thus, if a mother sets her child on the edge of a cliff and errs for just a moment by not watching him, he may fall off and be crippled or killed! Is that an answer?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: A very able answer, but it happens not to apply in this instance. Those in this salon cannot be inclayed under the best conditions not because of sins of their future parents—with whom they have possibly never been connected before in any way—but because of imperfections in their ownselves. They are all former Earthmen returning for a second life there, and for them this punishment has its compensations. They will face added difficulties—which they have made for themselves—but they have also more to gain from their Earthlife. You will understand this better later on. The really finest choices, children out of the most desirable parents, whom you did not see brought before this assemblage, are distributed in the first salon to those who come to Earth in the primitive stellarian state. As you went up, in each higher salon were egoes in a less perfect state on account of previous inclayments.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Stellarians come to Earth and stellarians come to Zu. Isn’t it about time you abandoned the pretence of the planet Zu? Let us decide on a single name—”

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“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Do I prevent you from saying ‘Earth?’ I even go as far as to humor you now and then. What does it matter to you if

occasionally I prefer the name Zu? I am used to it."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Very well. Zu, Earth, Hell,—call it what you like. In the meantime I must get a soul for tinting before it is born on Earth. Shall we return to the thirtieth salon now?"

My guide agreeing, we ascended to the next story and found that during our absence many of my fellow workers had left. One of them was just then trying to obtain a soul for tinting as a demagogue and misleader who would perform a special service during his forthcoming inclayment. Aided by the official in charge he tried to induce one of the persons waiting assignment to birth to accept this special service. They argued that this was a good opportunity for any of them, since they had all been ordered in Anidedarta to be inclayed under special conditions. They pointed out that whilst the soul of the volunteer would be tinted with an inclination to demagoguery and misleadership, it would also be tinted with a mixture of flowers of remorse, nobility, love, and other good qualities; and he would have the opportunity and the right to overcome the unfavorable tinting of his soul—which would be a successful culmination of the period of inclayment.

All the inducements suggested were not sufficient to move one of the few remaining persons in the salon to undertake this martyrdom, as they called it. In the end the official Birth Controller announced that he would have to apply the law. And since all of them were subject, by order from Anidedarta based on their previous inclayment, to such service, he would cast a lot to decide who would be impressed. Accordingly lots

were cast and the chosen one was escorted to the Soul Tinteries.

Several more selections were made in the same manner before my turn came. And then, because I was last and there were only two egoes to choose from, both of whom were willing to go with me to be tinted as revolutionary terrorists rather than wait for another day, the selection was quickly made by lot.

C5. With my charge at one side and Attarokib on the other I flew speedily back to the Tinteries. The trip was made so rapidly, due to the anxiety of the man I was escorting to be done with the process, that I had no opportunity to question him. When we arrived at our destination I turned my charge over to the head of the department. The latter, first ordering certain records to be made, instructed my charge to enter a pool of black light. No sooner

was it done than the ego fell into a profound sleep. He was lifted into one of the cauldrons, allowed to remain in it a few minutes, and removed. The same process was followed with the others brought from the Palace of Birth Control for tinting. When it was over they were all immersed in a pool of white light, which awakened them. The head of the department then addressed them, informing each one that he had been personally instrumental in creating the materials in which Iris soul was tinted, hence his assignment to take these materials back to Earth. But, the official added, though they had the power to do certain things as the result of their tinting, they would nevertheless be free to use or suppress their power, or to use it for good or ill. He concluded by wishing them all a successful inclayment, and appointed one of the workers of Mikahes to escort the group to the department of inclayment.

For perhaps another hour I stayed in the Tinteries of Mikahes, watching the work, assisting where I could, and questioning my companions. I passed from one department to another, and saw how good and evil forces were created, and sent back to Earth in various forms, out of the good and evil thoughts and words and deeds of its inhabitants. I saw how the well organised industries of Mikahes produce and export to Earth life and death, peace and war, happiness and misery, good harvests and floods, favorable seasons and earthquakes, prosperity and plagues, blessings and curses, all made out of materials that came from Earth and which the workers of Mikahes fashion into forces that would reproduce themselves. And in the Tinteries I saw the preparation of souls destined to make Earthly history, destined to be the leaders and misleaders, the explorers and inventors, the money barons and war lords, the revolutionaries and rulers of Earth,—tinted in the hopes and feelings and prayers of Earthmen.

Had Attarokib not called to me that it was time to resume our tour of Niames I would have stayed on much longer. I felt sure, however, that my guide had planned our itinerary carefully, each place for a definite purpose. I expressed my readiness to leave, and we did so immediately amidst the hearty farewells of my fellow workers.

At the great gate through which we had entered we met again the official who had greeted us.

“Namehem to Sepsafem: I see you are leaving. You have been with us quite a few hours, and you have earned all the Anozam you will want for the rest of your present stay in Niames.”

“Sepsafem to Namehem: Thank you. I am glad to have earned something here. But as a matter of fact,

considering my experience as one of your workers, I feel more indebted than ever.”

“Namehem to Sepsafem: I am glad you liked our conditions here.”

“Sepsafem to Namehem: Liked them? I think they are marvelous. I am especially impressed with your system of taxing everyone, from the simple assorters of flowers to the expert tinters and the highest heads of the departments, with an hour of work for each day’s vital necessities—and providing such work. I wish such a system could be introduced on Earth.”

“Namehem to Sepsafem: And what would you expect to achieve by that?”

“Sepsafem to Namehem: Wonders! Wonders! The criminally allowed possibility that a human should starve would be abolished—and we would have created at last one relationship which would bring together all humans in a single bond of brotherhood!”

“Attarokib to Namehem: Do you see my friend? Sepsafem is, I am afraid, an incurable reformer—poor fellow. He is always finding something to bestow as a benefit upon his fellowmen. First he wished to teach them to fly. Then he decided to try to invent an improved system or arrangement for the planet Zu. And now he would like to civilize the working conditons of Earth!”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: I yield to your superior sarcasm.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: I know—until some new reform will suggest itself to you. But come—we cannot lose any more time.”

We therefore signalled a final farewell to the official and took to flight, hands upon our girdles. I questioned Attarokib concerning the Mikahesians. Why were

these former Earthmen living in this land? Was this the destination of all who died on Earth? What sort of life did they lead?

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Patience, my friend. Do not jump at conclusions. Let us visit a few more places in Niames. You will discover everything. In the end I will take you for a visit to the homes of the Mikahesians—an interesting land.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: I will try to have the patience of a Zuman.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: That will suffice, I believe, until you glimpse the land to which we are going.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: You haven’t told me a thing about it!”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: I knew your patience wouldn’t last. Well, we are almost there. But I won’t say a thing except that you may be prepared for mystification and, perhaps, adventure.”

CHAPTER ELEVEN
BEHIND THE GRAVEYARD

We arrive at the ugly gate—The parade of the dead—My encounter with an unwelcome escort—My fight—How I drowned the black guard in the pool of light—The awakening of the torpid souls—In the Hall of Fame—I meet with an old friend and participate in a celebration—In the Hall of Shame—What happened before Captain Hatchet-head arrived in the Hall of Awakening—The tombstones.

C1. Shortly after Attarokib's last communication we arrived at the port of Atomelot. We soon stood before a huge gate at the border of a large island. On this gate was no evidence of the beauty that had excited my admiration everywhere else in this land of charm. It was so plain that humans could hardly have erected an affair more drab. It was very spacious, however, having several separate entrances within its width, each one broad enough to admit a hundred persons walking abreast. At each of the minor entrances stood an official scrutinizing a constant stream of arriving men and women. Occassionally an official would stop one of the arrivals and direct him to a different entrance. Nearly all the newcomers were accompanied by an escort of two personal guards. It was by the character of these escorts, I learned soon, that the guardians of the gateway were

able to judge in which section the incoming ego belonged.

Stationed near the first entrance, Attarokib and I saw the incoming egoes, whose appearance indicated that they belonged to various lands and nations, coming up from below by means of currents attached to their appendices, in the same manner as the people of Aimedrat. The personal guards, upon a close examination, seemed to resemble their charge. They had invariably the same features and the same height, but were different in color and in girth. Whilst one was always of a pure whiteness, the other was blacker than ink; and except in rare cases when they were almost equal in girth, one was sure to be fatter, more or less, than the other.

One of the entrances was reserved for those who had but a single, all white escort. Another, for those whose white escort was fatter than their black guard. The next for those whose escorts, black and white, were nearly equal. The fourth for those whose black escort was more corpulent. And the

last entrance was reserved for egoes whose sole escort was a black guard. It was chiefly in cases when the two escorts were nearly equipoised that doubt was felt as to which entrance should be used. The white escort would draw his charge toward the second entrance, the black would draw him toward the third or fourth. It was then that the official guardians of the gateways would decide the issue by directing the disputants either to the second or to the center.

At a nod from Attarokib we joined the stream of people marching in through the center. The next moment I was separated from my guide and gripped by both arms. I found myself now in the same position as the other arrivals. At my right was a white escort of about my own proportions. At my left was a black guard—

thin as a boy's fishing rod. Both looked familiar to me. I glanced in surprise from one to the other. They were smiling—the white one in a friendly way, the black one maliciously—and I knew their features. Then I recognized the black. He was the froghin who had followed me in the underground kingdom of Zu!

"You!" I cried. "You here! Take your paw off my arm this instant!"

"I will not now!" he replied. "I have a right to stay by you. Your appearance here means that your body is dead—like the bodies of all these people around us. And I have a right to accompany you now."

"He is mistaken!" whispered the white guard at my right. "But do not fear him. I am here to protect you."

"And who are you, my friend?"

"I am your white escort—the representative of all the good you have done and spoken and thought on Earth."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: And you did not warn me about this surprise! But surely my body has not died?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: No, indeed—but your lean friend there is hardly to be convinced of that. He finds you among those who have recently died on Earth, and has made up his mind that you must be in the same fix."

Attarokib then directed a message to my white escort. The latter, bowing politely to us, disappeared immediately. My black guard, however, clung tenaciously to my arm.

“If I were you,” said Attarokib to him, “I would also take my departure. I am warning you now. The time is not yet come for your presence here.”

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We had drawn aside during this conversation. My black guard replied only with jeers to Attarokib’s advice, asserting confidently that his right to escort me through every part of the land of Atomelot could not be questioned.

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Do you hear him jeering at me? Do you let him insult your friend?”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: But what can I do about it?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Do? Thrash him! It’s what I’d do if he belonged to me. Besides, a good thrashing would probably convince him that he is safer at a distance from you.”

The black guard, hearing this advice, which Attarokib had purposely communicated freely, released my arm and squared off as if to defend himself.

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: How can you ask me to fight with that puny creature? Do you realize that I am fifty times heavier than he?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Well, that will just about make it fair. If he were a little heavier I would not advise you to risk a thrashing from him. You have something to learn about his strength!”

Despite my guide’s warning I was not convinced that this lean being was a match for me. But as I wanted to be rid of him I resolved not to fight him but to administer a sort of paternal reproof. Looking him over I saw at once the futility of trying to spank a creature whose body was a stick, his arms and legs just four sticks ending in webby paws, and his head a ball of staring impudence. But how else could I punish him?

We were standing near the edge of the island of Atomelot. Hardly twenty feet away was the shore, beneath which the dark nitroxic ocean fell to a depth of

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thousands of miles. Determined to put an end to this ridiculous situation I took a step towards the black guard and seized one of his arms, intending to lift him, swing him around several times, and then hurl him through the air over the edge of the island and into the ocean.

The moment my hand touched him, the black guard backed away, swung his fist suddenly, and struck me squarely upon the jaw with such terrific impact that I did not touch the ground again until I recovered with my bands and head dangling in the ocean.

Slowly I stood up and gazed with mingled amazement and respect upon the powerful creature that could deliver such a blow. But not long. The sight of Attarokib smiling very knowingly upon me—as if to say "I warned you!"—impelled me to act. This time I approached the black guard cautiously. With my fists ready I circled several times around him, seeking an opening to strike him in the head. The wary black watched me like a cat. Suddenly he leapt forward and struck me twice, once over the heart and again on the jaw. I rolled upon the ground several times before I recovered.

Angry now, my senses and my pride deeply wounded, I jumped up and exchanged a dozen blows with the black. It was not exactly an even exchange, for I struck my opponent twice while he returned five blows to my one. I discovered that he was artful in evading a punch. His thinness was in his favor. To offset this advantage I tried to close with him. But he retreated, striking me with both fists as soon as I approached and knocking me down again. I sat, shamefaced. Then I rose again, deter mined to be deliberate and to make use of the knowledge of sparring that I had, for this opponent threatened to be more than a match for me.

Now the fight took a new turn. We sparred and dodged and struck and parried in true prize-ring style. My confidence gradually returned, and several times that I struck my opponent I felt that the blow might have demolished a brick wall. I wondered where I had gotten this strength. I had the satisfaction of knocking the black down twice with blows to his head that fell with all the force of my will. My anger vanished. I struck simply because I desired very heartily to knock the impudent creature down. As the fight progressed I had my wish more and more often. Finally when we were exchanging punches speedily near the edge of the island, I swung with the right hand, putting all my strength into the blow. The black guard toppled over into the ocean. I had the pleasure of seeing him fall a long way down and out of sight.

Satisfied with my accomplishment, I turned to see what Attarokib would say. He shrugged indifferently.

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: So-so! You did not do badly. But you made a very poor start. You should have taken my advice in the first place and set about thrashing him with a will. However, you are rid of him for awhile. I doubt if he will soon want to come close to you again. Well, let us return and enter.”

C2. A glance at the gateway showed me that the long line of people was still marching in, most of the men and women held by two escorts.

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Not so fast. I want to know whether those people are really the recent dead from Earth.”

Attarokib declared that they were, and not heeding my hesitation he walked to join the center line. I followed him, curiosity proving stronger than awe and

dread. In a little while I found myself crowded by a mass of dead men and women, walking at my right, at my left, behind and before me. I felt as if I had entered a morgue and all its inhabitants had risen to parade around me. Yet mixed with my revulsion, the result of long habit of thinking of dead people as cold, unfeeling corpses, was a feeling of kinship with these stolidly marching people—for there was un-corpselike life and animation in them, and my senses told me that they were in all respects my equals.

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Where are they going? And what is to happen?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Patience. You are going with them and you will see for yourself.”

But I felt that I must speak about something to divert my mind from the people around me.

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: I am surprised at the strength of that black guard—and at my own strength. I was astonished by the blows we delivered.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: What had you supposed—that because you are without your Earthbody you are a weakling—a puff of air? And even so—don’t you know that air is stronger than clay? Now you are not air—you are composed of one of the most powerful elements of the universe. Its character is such that the most delicate instruments of the scientists of Earth can scarcely discover its presence. You would be prone to call it ‘spiritual’—a false term inasmuch as it connotes unrealness. The fact is that you are so powerful that, knowing your power and willing to exercise it,

you could go through a wall of iron as easily as a seamstress pushes a needle through a piece of cloth."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: I understand it—yet it amazes me!"

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"Attarokib to Sepsafem: I will tell you why. Before you went to Earth the memory of your past was put to sleep. Since then you have learned to think in terms of the elements and forces of Earth and in proportions related with the possibilities of your clayen body. But now that I have made you conscious of the power of your real person when you are free—now you are able to understand."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Indeed, I do. I have never on Earth felt myself a thousandth part as strong, as able to do things, to feel, to employ my powers and senses, as now. Yet, for the very reason that I have learned to think in Earthly terms, it is hard to accustom myself to the thought that the hard, substantial things of Earth are the least substantive things in the universe. It is wonderful to feel that I am my own real self now, free, powerful—"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Hold, now! You have just had a demonstration that there are others quite as powerful. There are powers free in the universe that could destroy a planet with a motion—but they control themselves according to the law of the universe. And I must warn you that it is not permissible to exercise one's power except for a specific desirable purpose. So long as you did not know what you could do there was no need to tell you. Now I owe you this warning."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Never fear. I will control myself as do all the persons I have observed in Niames."

During the following brief while I had time to refleet, among other things, on the immensity of the debt I owed to the Nimikaharans for their giving me this opportunity to visit the land of Niames. It was fortunate, I reflected, that I had been declayed ere I was admitted

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to view these mysteries. A person in his flesh body, I thought, could scarcely bear up under the shock of so many surprising discoveries, not to mention the joy and exultation of being initiated into all these marvelous environs. Then, suddenly, I was regaled by a fresh surprise.

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Look! There is someone on our line whose features I seem to remember from somewhere!”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: If you will quit staring at him for a moment and look behind, you will see someone whom you know.”

I turned my head. Surely enough, about twenty paces behind me, my black guard was following.

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Don’t rush to subdue him again. He has a right to follow you here to find out whether you belong or are only a tourist. I pointed him out for a special reason. We wll soon come to a place where he may approach. Watch him and be prepared to do as I shall direct.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: As you say. But I can’t take my mind off that man. I knew him somewhere.”

We had passed through the great gateway, where the official guardian greeted us with a smile that seemed to say he was surprised to see us there. We walked now through a long salon that spread many miles before us and was nearly three miles wide. It was partitioned by glasslike walls into five sections—one for each gateway. Walking through the center I could see the marching lines in the passageways at my right and left. Not far from the beginning of the salon I saw a pool of light formed by many powerful beams that shone down from the ceding. There was such a pool in every section. As each person approached this pool his escorts suddenly released

him; and as he entered it, they went around its edges, gripping him again when he emerged on the other side.

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Walk up to the pool as if you were about to enter it—but don’t do it. Your black friend will rush up to take hold of you as you emerge. The instant he is close to you seize him and push him in.”

I wondered what the purpose of this could be. But T obeyed Attarokib carefully. As the black guard approached me I gripped his reed-like body with both hands, lifted him up—he kicked and punched desperately—and hurled him into the pool of light. He fell to the floor and lay there as if unconscious. Two officials plunged in at once, lifted the helpless creature, and, at a signal from Attarokib, carried him off.

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Now you are rid of him until you yourself do something to awaken him—which won’t happen until you are on Earth.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: All this is not quite plain. If this fellow is the representation of all the evil I have thought and spoken and done, as I

understand, why is he unconscious from contact with that light? And why don't all these people, who seem to dread their black guards so, do as I have done?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: The light is harmful for him because his constitution is unfit to bathe in it. As for why you were permitted to throw him into it, I will tell you. He was already, for all present purposes, dead—and killed by you. You destroyed him unwittingly—in Mikahes. Do you remember when you sorted the flowers? And do you recall how then, realizing what they were made of, you regretted your own creation of unwholesome replicas and resolved to be careful against

doing it again? That resolution destroyed this creature, who was only the representation of those replicas you had already created. But I obtained for you the pleasant privilege of putting him out yourself. The others have . no such right over their black guards. However, he is disposed of only until you return to Earth and do something to recall him to consciousness."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Thanks for troubling to provide me with such rare pleasure. And to prove that I hold no grudge, against him for the past, I shall try to do nothing that will prevent him from dying peacefully in his sleep!"

We had passed around the pool of light by now. As the egoes emerged from it I saw a marvelous change in them. Their forms were divided into a mixture of brightly translucent parts shining with a crystalline luster, and opaque parts of the color of grey mud. I was reminded of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream—a mixture of gold and silver and clay. I looked through the glassy partitions on both sides and saw the same scene enacted in the neighboring sections of the Hall of Awakening. At my left, however, the egoes came forth from the pool more opaque than brilliant, and at my right—more brilliant than opaque, while in my own section the mixture was a fairly even one. The men and women who emerged from the pool now clung intensely to their white guards and looked with apprehension upon the black guards who gripped them fast. Many wept and lamented as if they had just grown conscious of a fearful grief.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: What is all this about?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: We are now in the Hall of Awakening. When the ego steps under the beams of Wakelight, his soul is roused from the

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it was put before inclayment. Now, for the first time since going to Earth, each person here remembers his past, recalls his true identity, and the purpose for which he was inclayed."

This was news to me—I had not realized that the release of the ego from the clay body upon its death yet left him in the same condition as in the clay—his past hidden and his soul in a torpor.

We were marching on in the meantime. The line did not stop a moment. But as each person in it reached the end of the salon, he was stopped by an official who gave him a Timestrip—such an instrument of two spools as I had seen first in the school of the underground kingdom of Zu. Receiving the Timestrip, each person turned to the left towards a salon from which came sounds of weeping and sorrow. At the same time I heard other sounds, indicating joyfulness and celebration, from a salon at my right.

C3. Instead of following the people around us towards the left, Attarokib led me to the other side. We entered a vast salon of matchless beauty, filled with people who were freely giving vent to their happiness by dancing and singing. The room was perhaps fifty miles long and several miles wide. The floors, the walls, and the ceiling were made out of gems of a thousand colors, inlaid with patterns of flowers and other designs. In niches in both walls, up to a height of nearly a mile, were placed inlaid portraits of human faces, made in the same gemwork, each one beautifully framed. The workmanship was so fine and realistic that again and again I found myself expecting the portraits to address some remark to me.
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"Sepsafem to Attarokib: What place is this—and whose are these portraits?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: This is the Hall of Fame—one of the interesting show-places of Niames. And the portraits are those of former Earthmen who distinguished themselves in their Earthlife."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Is this the reward of a successful Earthlife?"

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: You may call it that. In reality these portraits are only miniatures taken from the real ones, and are hung here for the benefit of those who have no opportunity to see the originals.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: And where are the originals?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Dispersed throughout the universe. Each original of these miniatures is stamped upon the face of a planet—and the planet bearing the features of any person belongs thereafter to him. He—or she—selects and orders upon it the sort of life that appeals to his own good taste and notions, and spends a good deal of time in promoting its individual splendors. Many Eke to entertain their friends upon their own planet.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: How wonderful—to have a planet of ones own, to fashion a world according to ones own taste—”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: You could almost give up the idea of rearranging the life-system of Zu if you had such a planet?”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: I wish you would stop reminding me of that! Besides, I suppose the life-system of—Earth is necessary for the achievement of the right to a world of one’s own. I suppose there are planets enough for everyone?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: You are right both times. And these people whose portraits you see here are those who have already achieved their own worlds, and have earned the right of admission to the park of Aiahatnig, and the right to visit all the planets and peoples of the universe—in short, they are the men and women who emerged from the Earthlife with their purpose in going there achieved.”

Deeply impressed with the greatness of the originals of these portraits I walked awhile around the Hall of Fame, studying the beautiful gemwork with increased interest and respect. I reflected that if the task of ordering the life of a planet was a mighty one, it was not more than great stellarians would need for the exercise of their individual wisdom and the free display of their personal taste and inclinations. In the midst of a reverie filled with vague notions of what I would do if given an empty planet with the power to make what I would of it, a thought suddenly occurred to me.

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: It seems to me that I know at least one of the stamped planets—and I would like to ask what man’s portrait is drawn upon its face.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Which planet?”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: The moon!”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: It is a stamped planet—but the features are a woman’s. Whose? She is a lady of whom you know a little by the name of Eve! See—there is its miniature. And next to it, the handsome portrait of her mate—Adam.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: You amaze me—and yet, why not? It’s very reasonable. Who else than Eve would give the moon such a quality as to be invaluable to the millions of her daughters?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: I suppose you mean the moonlight and its traditional effects. You are probably right.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Another idea has occurred to me in connection with this portrait, a rather humorous one—”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: By all means utter it. Wit is highly regarded in Niames—it is a divine gift much desired. Now if you were to utter a really original witticism it would be signaled in your name to all the stars—”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: O, I scarcely believe it deserves to be fussed over. But I was thinking it must be because the Moon bears Mother Eve’s impression that our women on Earth are so changeable.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Not bad. But I am sorry, my friend, to inform you that you are not the first to have uttered this witticism. In fact it was Adam himself who gave it birth after he returned from Earth. And he went further. When he saw his mate’s face in the Moon he said, ’Blessed be God, since He has combined my Eve with the Moon. She won’t be changing so often henceforth.’ ”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: I yield to Adam on both points—precedence and excellence. But remember—he had an advantage over me on each score: he knew Eve herself, and intimately, while I have known only a few of her daughters—and not too well.”

During our conversation I had not been paying much attention to the joyous people in the Hall. I noticed now that a large group of persons was arriving from the first section of the Hall of Awakening—people who had but a single escort of white. From the opposite

side of the Hall came a mass of people to meet the new arrivals, evidently their near friends and kin.

I could not remember ever having beheld such happiness. They embraced one another and danced out of sheer exuberance. Their happiness was so contagious that I was strongly inclined to join their merrymaking. They retired after a while to many alcoves on both sides of the Hall of Fame where the Timestrips, which each arriving person had been given in the Hall of Awakening, were exhibited. These Timestrips, I saw, were complete records of the Earthlife of each arrival and showed admirable lives, honorable pursuits, liberality of view, pure hearted love of all humans, heroic self sacrifice for the welfare of others, kindness to servants, helpfulness to peoples of the seemingly lesser grades forebearance with strangers, justice and respect for foreign people and their customs. They had excelled in the wisdom of their conduct with their fellowmen. The whitest persons, who nevertheless were at least slightly spotted with opacity, had, according to their Timestrips, performed some deeds of foolishness into which they had been misled by conditions they failed to understand correctly. For these they were heartily ashamed, but their friends made light of them by pointing out their innocence of evil intent.

While I was watching several such scenes with wonder and gradually dawning comprehension, two Niamesians approached us. One of them invited me to join his friends in a nearby alcove of the Hall in the festival, the other invited Attarokib to accompany me. I looked to my guide, but he was already following his escort. Thanking the Niamesian, I took his arm. Soon we were in the designated alcove—a name of courtesy, for it was a room more than a mile around, and its gaily ornamented walls, its richly inlaid floors, its blended colored lights,

formed a harmony of beautiful appointment that I had not seen equaled even in Niames.

Facing the entrance, under a canopy decked with a myriad of fanciful sparkling gems, sat a young woman, exquisitely beautiful, whose features were immediately familiar. Yet I could not place her. As I wondered who she was, and why I had been summoned to this alcove rather than to any other of several dozen like it where similar festivals were in progress, a few

of the people in the room took me by the arms and led me forward to the beautiful lady.

"Here is Sepsafem," said one of them to her, speaking freely, "for whom you have waited. Now you have your wish, and he may participate in our celebration."

C4. The lady greeted me with a smile that contained a world of grace and kindliness and, extending her arm to me, declared that she was happy to see her devoted comrade again! My confusion, and my embarrassment are indescribable. I took her hand and, bowing politely over it, said something about never forgiving myself, if I lived a billion eternities, for having forgotten her. The next moment I was regretting my frankness and saying to myself that Attarokib, in my place, would not have been such an ass—he would have been quick to say something clever which would not reveal his forgetfulness but lead her to reveal her identity. Then again I reminded. myself that we were not on Zu but in Niames, where people said just what they thought. And while all this, and much more, was running through my mind, the lady was laughing a charming, musical laughter, which was so kind that it did not hurt me at all, though it was at my expense.

She stopped at last. Turning to one of her friends she asked him to display her Timestrip upon a crystal sheet in a comer of the alcove. The man hastened to do her bidding. In a minute I knew who the lady was. The Timestrip showed as the central figure in all its swiftly flying scenes an old woman whom all London had known, at one time, as the Good-Mother of the Slums. She was more than sixty years old then, a widow with a moderate income who devoted her days and nights to collecting money, food, clothing and medicine which she distributed with hearty loving-kindness to all the poor and unfortunate in the filthy slums. In many of these scenes I recognized my ownself—then a boy of twelve or thirteen, whom she often commandeered to carry her numerous parcels, for she was my mother's friend and advisor. I remembered it all, now, remembered how she had taught me by her example to be concerned about the welfare of those less fortunate than ourselves, remembered how she never permitted fatigue, weather and the disabilities of old age to interfere with her benevolences.

During the running of the Timestrip I listened to the free conversation of the people around me and learned many interesting things. I learned that the festival was in honor of the coining of a planet for this wonderful lady; that her portrait was to have been placed in the Hall of Fame two days ago but she, learning of my presence in Niames, had delayed it until I could be present because she had such pleasant memories of my attending her on her errands of mercy; and that my being in Niames was a matter of common knowledge to millions of Niamesians who had been informed of the arrival of a person yet an Earthman by means of the Niamesian system of public intelligence, one of the departments of Mikahes that sent out the news of the universe.

Though I remembered the Good-Mother of the Slums as a wrinkled lady, bent with years, I saw her now in the true appearance of her person. And I assured Attarokib privately that her radiant beauty was, to my knowledge, without compare.

I did not watch the conclusion of the Timestrip, for the beautiful lady took me aside and held me in a delightful reminiscent conversation while her numerous friends sang and danced and amused themselves in various ways. She reminded me how I had attacked a drunkard once who called her "old hen" and got myself soaked in a trough for my gallantry. And I reminded her how she had called me her "young man", and made me her devoted slave thereby. We laughed over such things until someone announced that everything was ready for the installation of the portrait.

The entire company proceeded into the Hall of Fame where, to the sound of beautiful ceremonial music, the portrait was set into one of the niches in the wall. This done, the company parted. The lady of honor bade farewell to me at the exit of the Hall, with expressions of regret that she could not invite me then to come with her. I saw at the same time that many of the new arrivals who had met their Niamesian kinsfolk and friends in the Hall of Fame were leaving with them, receiving at the exit a blue girdle like mine. Others were yet in the Hall of Fame, showing their Timestrips to their friends.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Tell me, where do these Timestrips of their own activities on Earth, which the arriving Earthmen are given in the Hall of Awakening, come from?"

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: From Earth, of course. Each Earthman has one, which hovers around him constantly from the moment of his birth to the moment of

his entering the pool of Wakelight in Atomelot, winding itself from one spool onto the other, day and night, in light and darkness, receiving a complete record of its subject’s doings.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: I am marveling again—to think that such a record exists for every Earthman, invisible, unknown, ever active—”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Certainly—yours is at work right now, even, since you are still an Earthman. Just glance up yonder. Do you see it?”

I looked up towards the place indicated by Attarokib. Not a very great distance above me was indeed the double spool of a Timestrip, spinning rapidly and taking an indelible impression of my every motion!

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: It gives me an odd feeling to see how I am so constantly photographed. But what specific use is made of these Timestrips when they are complete?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: You will find out later. Now let us go to another interesting place in Atomelot—to the Hall of Shame. Come, our time is short. The day is soon gone.”

Through a special passageway we arrived in another salon under the same roof. As against the Hall of Fame, the Hall of Shame was not lacking in splendor and magnificence. But it was by no means as large in size. Instead of portraits in niches the walls were overhung with a few small slabs resembling gravestones. Each slab bore a name and the number of a Timestrip.

I wondered whether people died here too—in Niames, but did not ask at once because I was interested in watching the scenes that were being enacted by people from the middle section of the Hall of Awakening as they met their Niamesian friends and kin. I did ask why only

people from the third section were coming in here, and Attarokib told me that those from the second had ah ready had their turn, that the present group would be followed by the fourth and fifth, and finally the second section again would empty its fresh arrivals into this Hall. While Attarokib

was answering me I caught sight once more of the mysterious person whose familiar identity had bothered me in the Hall of Awakening.

C5. Like all the other arrivals, he was surrounded now by a group of people who were watching his Timestrip displayed. Sadness and profound shame were plainly depicted upon his features, and among his friends his grief found both echo and sympathy. Eager to identify him, I approached and glanced at his Timestrip. Instantly I knew him He was a distant relative of mine, a retired officer whom I remembered well from my early childhood. I recognized especially the peculiar shape of his head—broad in the back and tapering to extreme thinness in front of the face, on which account we children had called him affectionately Captain Hatchet-head. In recent years I had lost track of him, and I thought that I could hardly have met him again under more peculiar circumstances. The Timestrip soon showed me how he had lived his last years in a little Welsh village, spending his days, and his pension, in the local inn. He drank more than was good for him, and one day was carried home to be placed in a bed of agony where his suffering was as plain as the gritting of his teeth to conceal from the bystanders the pain that was soon to pass forever. The Timestrip showed him upon his deathbed, next day, surrounded by members of his family, whom I did not know, and by some servants. A doctor was present, but his

professional air indicated that he had no notion that he could stave off the inevitable.

Hovering over the bed was a small figure in ego form, hence invisible to the people in the room. He seemed to be examining the dying captain with an expression that resembled more nearly the doctor’s than any other I could think of. He was the Bearer of Death. In his hand was a long spear, thin as a needle. He touched the corners of the captain’s mouth with it, and his Ups, so that they twitched nervously. Finally he inserted the needle between his lips, which half opened at the moment, and let fall a drop of some yellowish matter from it, then took himself off at once. There was a convulsive tremble, the captain’s face turned yellow and soon he grew rigid.

At that very moment there emerged from the clay body the captain’s ego, the real person who had been the captain, coming forth as if from all its pores. He looked about him for a moment, seemed mightily displeased,

and at once tried to reenter the now lifeless clay. He jumped from one side of the bed to another, flattened himself upon the clay, and tried to force himself into it, but to no avail. This activity continued unobserved by the people at the bedside, who indulged freely in the customary lamentations and reactions. At the same time that the ego tried to reenter the body another peculiar thing took place. The ego as a whole had the appearance of an Aimedratian—partly brilliant and partly opaque; in the case of the captain he was nearly all translucent except the head, which was quite opaque. I saw then that the soul, in the form of another body, emerged from the ego only to be held fast at the head. The two half-separated bodies had the appearance of a colossus, open at the bottom and united at the top. When, however, the inner

member found separation from the other impossible, it returned Eke a caged bird that had stuck its head out for a moment through the bars of its prison. This, Attarokib told me later, was the yet torpid soul trying to escape from the opacity in the ego which made it feel uncomfortable.

Suddenly the ego sprang from the bed and toward a cabinet in a corner of the room upon which stood a tray and glasses. He made as if to open the door of the cabinet, but instead shrugged his shoulders as if doubting whether he could do it, and gazed longingly upon his body in the bead. I understood that he could have penetrated through the substance of the cabinet and gone right into it, but being yet unawakened he did not know his own powers. It was just as well, though, for he was past swallowing any of the liquids of Earth. He turned his attention next to a sideboard upon which were his favorite pipes and tobacco. He caressed the pipes but dared not try to lift one, sniffed at the tobacco box but left it covered. He went about the house touching one thing and another and tried ever so often to reenter his unbreathing body. During the few days that intervened between his death and burial he touched everything in the house, placed his Ups to every article of food and drink that was left uncovered, and searched in every open dish. But he was powerless to consume anything.

Finally came the funeral, a military affair. There were eulogistic orations that the captain plainly resented. One of the speakers, apparently a relative, angered the ego so that he showed signs of wishing to strike him with his fists again and again. But the speaker remained happily unaware of the fact

that the man whom he was praising was at that moment wishing to strike the teeth out of his mouth. The captain, seeing the futility of his

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anger, at last retired, taking his defeat less philosophically than one would expect in an old soldier. He sat for the remainder of the funeral upon the casket, until they lowered it into the grave. Even then he continued about the grave for days, descending into it now and then, still trying to reenter the clay that had formerly framed him. Between such efforts he would rush back to his house, test the cabinet of liquors, pat his pipes affectionately, and dally about his personal affects.

During one of these visits he came upon a woman opening a box from which she drew out some money and papers. The ego watched her in a rage, and prepared to snatch the papers from her hand. The woman seemed to feel uneasy at this time, so that I wondered if she felt the captain's presence.

Over days and weeks the Timestrip sped, showing the captain lamenting his condition upon the grave of his clay body, revisiting his home and his old haunts, but less and less often with the passage of time. At the end, in an exhausted state, he cast a last anguished glance upon the grave, shrugged his shoulders despairingly, and proceeded slowly, with drooping head, toward the gateway of the cemetery. There he was met by his two escorts, each of whom moved with alacrity to take him in charge.

The captain instantly tried to evade the dark guard, seeking shelter behind the white one. The latter, in fact, tried to fend off his black twin, which resulted in a fight between the two. The ego stood aside during this brief engagement, trembling Eke a leaf in the wind. The fighters, however, were not long in discovering that they were about evenly matched. Upon this they struck up a truce, each taking the frightened ego by one arm. A moment later they were ascending by means of a speeding current

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toward the port of Atomelot. They entered by the middle gateway, continued by the central passageway, and entered the Hall of Awakening. In the passageway scene, which I had beheld before with my own sight, I saw my ownself and Attarokib following a few feet behind the captain and his personal guards. The Timestrip came to an end with the captain's stepping into the pool of light that beamed down from above.

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: A wonderful and moving record—how a person lived, and how he died; every instant of his stay on Earth, all upon that thin Timestrip! But tell me, have all people the same experience after death?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: No. Those who are much attached to the interests of their Earthlife take along before they reconcile themselves to the loss and surrender to their guards for appearance in Atomelot; sometimes months. Those who have few or slight attachments upon Earth may be ready with the first signs of the body’s decay.”

C6. When the captain’s Timestrip had run its full length out, I glanced once more around me. The scene in the Hall of Shame was in stark contrast with that of the Hall of Fame. The gayety and happiness of the last was replaced by gloomy bitterness and sorry forebodings in the former. The Hall of Shame was filled with persons who had arrived from Earth within the last few hours. They had just been awakened. Among those that met them here were people whom they had wronged secretly—without the victims’ ever suspecting it until the arrival’s Timestrip revealed it now. Their shame was unutterable. To this was added envy of others who, overcoming equal obstacles, had come forth with honors from

the Earth-test—people who on Earth were perhaps despised and held in contempt; and abject misery in contemplation of the many wrongs left behind on Earth, for the righting of which it may be necessary to go through another inclayment, another term of Hell; and bitter disappointment because of failure to have attained the things for which the adventure on Earth was originally undertaken.

Disappoinment, misery, no little fear, envy and above all shame, in a degree possible only to the hypersensitive constitution of the ego person, are the lot of him who comes into the Hall of Shame in Atomelot. The depth of his emotions is pitiable to see. Such happiness as he might have felt in reunion with parents, brothers, sisters, friends, is nullified by the circumstances of the meeting. The sight of himself or herself in particular scenes, or the contemplation of secret deeds which are soon to be exposed on the Timestrip is mortifying beyond words. And there is no honorable way to avoid the exhibition of the complete Timestrip. It is the custom in Niames and the law of Atomelot. Every instant of the life of the returned

person, every move, every deed, every expression, every thought, speeds clearly across the crystal displayer, whether it took place by day or by night, in light or in darkness, openly or secretly, alone or in company, good, bad, and insignificant, a complete story in kaleidoscopic review.

The friends who behold the record of the arrival's Timestrip are often themselves highly embarrassed at sight of the deeds displayed, and they watch eagerly to see if there is not some extenuating feature in it. One can easily understand how the perpetrator of the deed feels in face of the watcher's embarrassment.

Among those present at the Timestrip reviewings are some who have other than a friendly interest in the returned ego. There are some who come for the purpose of verifying suspected wrongs done to themselves or their kinsfolk. The only thing that saves the arrival from going to the very depths of unspeakable misery is the consolation of his white guard and his friends at the display of his good and noble deeds.

To understand the emotions of the returned Earthmen when they met their parents, brothers, sisters, other kin, and friends, was not difficult; nor could I help feeling with them the anguish of their position. Those who came to welcome the arrivals and found them consigned to the Hall of Shame were no little disturbed, and plainly disappointed, to see their loved ones in partial opacity—the sign that the luster of the arrival's soul has been dimmed in some measure by his conduct on Earth. Sometimes, in extreme instances, the sadness in the mien of the welcomers gave way to half-suppressed glances of silent reproof. Nearly always the emotions of the returned Earthman, the mixed feelings of shame, and remorse, and envy and fear, were hidden under an assumed air of calm stoicism. But occasionally, at sight of himself or herself in the midst of doing something particularly atrocious, something that he or she had perhaps always regarded as a dead secret—and would, on Earth, have committed suicide rather than let it become known—at such moments the grim mask fell; the man, or the woman, as it might be, lowered the head and hid the anguished features in trembling hands. There were moments during the display of the Timestrips of nearly every man and woman present when I could perceive that they would rather be dead forever than go through this ordeal. But there was no avoiding it—the law of Atomelot was plain:

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After the Hall of Awakening, the exhibition of the Timestrip in the Hall of Fame or the Hall of Shame—according to its story.

My observations were interrupted by Attarokib's remark that the day was almost gone and that if I wished to participate in one of the most important and interesting activities of Niames we must leave at once.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Before we go, tell me what are these tombstones on the wall? Do people die here too?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Here is the only place where they can die. There is of course no accidental or natural death for a human personality. It occurs only when ordered by the Supreme Court of Niames under special conditions."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Do you mean that any of these persons here in the Hall of Shame may be sentenced to die?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: No, certainly not. None of these run that danger. Only some of those who come through the fifth section of the Hall of Awakening, with only a black escort, may die. As you have seen, they are few indeed. The rest, from the second, third, and fourth sections, will be sent to the hospitals in Niames, or back to Earth. And as only some of those who come here from the fifth section may die, the others will have opportunity to rehabilitate themselves."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: You speak so simply about the real death of a human—of an ego person—and I don't understand what such death can be like!"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: And how can I explain it to you? Do you, as a living Earthman, understand what the death of the clay body is like?"

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"Sepsafem to Attarokib: No. But I know the results of it, at least. All Earthmen surmise that they know the results, thinking it is the exit of the 'soul' from the human person. I know even better: that it means the liberation of the complete human person, together with his soul, from the clay body."

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Then I will tell you the result of real death. It means the extinction of the person's identity, the destruction of the ego and distribution of its atomic parts over the universe, so that what was once a human personality ceases to exist."

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: But what happens to the soul? Somehow I was under the impression that it was an indestructible entity—”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Perishment of the ego liberates his soul. The soul is then in no way longer related with the extinguished ego. It has no personality, and may be set into a newly created ego to serve and enlighten him. The real personality of any human, you know, is the ego. Once separated from the ego the soul loses all special identity.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Is there any particular reason why the features of the extinguished egoes are not represented on these slabs as is the case with those admitted to the Hall of Fame?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: To inscribe them here at all is essential as a record, but to make public their features would be an unnecessary insult to their memories.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: It’s dreadful to think of all this—yet I would like to see the functioning of your courts.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: We are going now to one of the courts!”

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“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Indeed? Why did you keep it secret? Come. But wait. What about my Captain Hatchet-head? Shall I not at least greet him?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Not now. We shall meet him later.”

We had reached the end of the Hall of Shame. An official greeted us as we emerged, and immediately after that we were soaring through the atmosphere of Niames, which was fast taking on the splendid hues of night.

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CHAPTER TWELVE
THE PAVILION OF JUSTICE

The busiest place in the universe—How I sat with the jury—The trial of the pious miser—The Foolstool—How sentence was pronounced—The sadistic bravado—The politician who became a mosquito—The trial of Captain Hatchet-head—How I saved him from the Sahara—The rich man who became a tramp—Arraignment of the religious fanatic—The sentence of death.

C1. If there was anything I craved to see in Niames more than all else it was the courts. I anticipated eagerly hearing its procedure and decisions. I therefore kept urging my guide on to greater speed. But although we soared at a rate doubtless faster than a score of miles to the minute I found opportunity to question the guide and elicit from him some information concerning the courts of Niames. He told me that there were many divisions of the courts, and that he did not think we would have time to visit them all. But he promised to show me a good deal of them nevertheless. He told me also that the function of the courts was to pass upon the life of every Earthman and to dispose of him accordingly.

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: We are almost in Anidedarta now—that is the name of the island of the Niamesian courts. Now since you are so keenly interested in them, I am going to do something which will enable you to see their functioning from the most advantageous

angle. I am going to ask one of the chief judges to let us serve on his jury."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: I a juror in Niames? Why that is wonderful—and perhaps too much. What do I know about your laws?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: As much as any Niamesian juror. We are governed chiefly by the universal laws of common sense, and all the jurors are simply Earthmen who have distinguished themselves with applied common sense."

My questions were interrupted by our arrival in Anidedarta. Attarokib led me at once into a beautiful structure of enormous proportions, occupying several score square miles of space, and divided into many pavilions. In each pavilion a court was in session at the time of our arrival.

Concerning the beauty of the place I can hardly give more than the merest suggestion. The floors and walls were of inlaid gemwork. The domelike roofs of the pavilions were carved out of single rocks of blue-white diamond, deep red ruby, or polychromatic opal. The different types of cupolas, I discovered, are changed constantly to indicate whether one or another division is holding its sittings.

The most astounding thing about the Niamesian courts was the orderliness of all their processes and conduct—order maintained by forces that did not obtrude themselves in the pavilion dramas. It was as if everything took place without being guided, and yet the absence of any conflict indicated plainly a prearrangement of details governing the least minutiae Those who were to stand trial arrived betimes in the proper court and pavilion. Those who were to participate in the jury were present in their assigned places. The judges and presiding

officers carried on with a precision that indicated they knew well their duties. Those against whom a sentence was passed went to accept it without being urged, without the exercise of force, and without special guards to enforce it.

The gigantic proportions of Anidedarta must have demanded the presence of millions of orderlies to direct the machinery of the courts, to guide the persons come to be tried, their friends, their accusers, their defenders, and the innumerable spectators, and to see to the countless details attendant upon courts in session. Yet there was no sign of attendants, while the procedure was not interrupted by any delay or discrepancy. In one vast pavilion a trial was going on at which several million interested persons were present. They had flattened their persons temporarily so as to occupy less space; but although there was not one orderly to direct them there was no crowding, no inconvenience, no distemper. Ofttimes when the judges needed special records and other things connected with the functioning of the courts, there was no business of sending someone to look for them and delay of the trial in the meantime. The judges simply put forth their hands to a certain hollow place over the round tables at which they presided; what they desired instantly came forth, as if some special supervising department had anticipated the need. When no longer wanted, it was simply replaced on the other side of the table, wherefrom it vanished promptly.

In my estimation this was the busiest of all places. A million things were done in a minute, despatched with instantaneous facility, quietly, automatically, in the best of order. Everyone knew his place, knew what to do, and when and how to do it, without subjection to annoying directions.
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"Sepsafem to Attarokib: This is marvelous, this is extraordinary! But who is directing it all? If I were to stand trial in one of these courts I would not know what to do first, or where and when to go. Yet I see everyone carrying on as if he were participating in some well rehearsed play!"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: There are millions of Niamesian officials occupied with the management of the efficiency of our courts, issuing a continual stream of messages to all who come near Anidedarta or who are wanted here. Everyone moving about here does so by direction. You cannot perceive the millions of messages because they are communicated directly to those for whom they are intended, and such signals as concern us particularly are issued to me because I am officially your guide. However, I have received only this order: To go freely through the courts, wherever your fancy leads. There is one exception, a definite instruction for our appearance. But of this you shall learn in due time."

By this time we had made our way into one of the large pavilions where a handsome and dignified Niamesian judge was calling out the names of those who were to act as jurors in the session about to begin. Great was my amazement, though this accorded with what I had already observed of the invisible and precise direction of the courts, when Attarokib's name was called and, immediately after him, my own name. We were the sixty-ninth and seventieth jurors, completing the proper number. I followed Attarokib in taking my place upon the jury dais. We exchanged a polite greeting with the judge as we took our places upon soft seats that reminded me of the chairs in Villa Longanim.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: I see you lost no time in obtaining places for us. You will have to help me in my
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duties, however, since I know nothing concerning them."

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: You need not be worried. Everything here will be explained by the judge. Our sessions are divided in this court into three parts—Personal, Civil, and Criminal. As we change the character of our

sitting, the color of the cupola above us will alter. But here comes the first trial."

C2. The judge, directing his communication to the jury, announced that we were to sit as a Personal Court. I glanced at the dome of the pavilion. It was like a single chandelier of blue-white diamond. I turned my sight next upon the defendant. He was a man with a rather self-satisfied air, as if he marveled that it should be necessary to try him. At his right hand stood his white escort, and at his left hand his black guard—the last much the fatter of the two.

The session was opened with a number of questions that the judge addressed to the man on trial. All the intercommunication in the court was free, so that everyone present could receive it, except part of the discussion among the jurors and between judge and jury.

"Do you understand," said the judge to the accused, "that you are here to have your recent life-in-clay reviewed, and your person disposed of accordingly?"

The accused nodded.

"Do you understand that your two personal escorts, white and black, are respectively your defender and accuser?" Again the accused nodded.

"Do you understand that your personal condition, the fact that your form is approximately three-fourths opaque, indicates that you have probably failed to accomplish what you proposed to do in your inclayment?"

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"My Timestrip will show," the accused replied after some hesitation.

"Then let us proceed to the review of the Timestrip," the judge ordered.

Immediately the Timestrip of the accused was displayed upon a crystal sheet in front of the court. As its scenes sped on I realized that this was not a complete Timestrip but had been cut in many places to eliminate what was regarded by both the accuser and defender as irrelevant in the Personal Court. Nor was the Timestrip allowed to run its course. It was stopped again and again to allow the rival escorts to argue according to the evidence of the Timestrip. Said the black escort, during a scene in a church where his charge was attending Sunday services:

"You see that my honored father, here, was a good churchman. Every tenth or twelfth time he came to church he would piously open up his purse

and drop into the poor-box a whole copper, deploring that they minted no smaller coins—and he unable to cut them in two! You can see that during the circle of a year the poor of the land cost him five or six coppers. There are some bright years when his generosity yielded up as many as seven pieces of metal. When one takes into consideration that he was worth a good forty thousand gold pieces and lately had an income of ten thousand gold pieces yearly it is evident that my honorable parent was a most charitable person, generous to a fault—"

I cannot render an account of his entire address, for it was marked by great length and exhaustiveness, keeping pace, however, with the speed of the Timestrip. But the black guard of the accused, (whom he persisted in honorable father, honorable parent, honorable

progenitor,—much to the latter's discomfort—) did not neglect a single personal fault or sin in the subject of his accusation, the facts being corroborated by the Timestrip. It was demonstrated that its central object had been a Godfearing and even pious man, but—the chief Personal charge against him—odiously miserly. He had underpaid his help, overcharged his customers, declined to help with more than words those whom he called friends, was niggardly in clothing his family and himself, stingy with food, (one scene of the Timestrip—it evoked a burst of laughter in the court room—showed him counting the beans his wife had taken to cook a soup with,) and he charged an enormous interest for his money, which was loaned only to those who left a most valuable security.

Against these telling accusations the white guard, smaller in size than his black twin, argued valiantly. He pointed out that the accused was, on the whole, a fine fellow. He did not consciously lie, he never went about gossiping and speaking evil of people, he was not conceited, he never deliberately insulted anyone, and he prayed sincerely for guidance. His only true fault was a mental weakness on the score of the rarer metals of Earth. This, declared the able defender, was in reality the fault of the hypocritical accuser who had encouraged the man's stinginess, flattered his exaggerated thriftiness, and threatened him with dire consequences whenever he spent a coin for charity, for his family's welfare, or for his ownself.

It was a very able defence, I thought, and remarked as much to Attarokib, who readily agreed with me. He added that it was the anticipation of this defence which had made the accused feel so cocksure of himself. The presiding judge interrupted us by asking the jurors

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to express their views. The first juror declared that he thought the miserliness of the accused should be excused on the ground that it was a disease in him rather than a crime. The next juror offered a defence for another personal wrong with which the accused was charged. This thing continued throughout the jury. By the time Attarokib's turn came, he being sixty-ninth, he declared that he thought no further defence was necessary. I was much embarrassed to be asked for my opinion next. However, being the last juror, I did my best to follow the lead of my colleagues in defending the accused. I confessed, however, that I had a profound personal prejudice against black guards.

"That feeling," the judge remarked, while my fellow-jurors smiled, "is one in which we all join. But as there are no judges or jurors available who feel differently, we must do our best to be impartial. However, it is certain that the accused is more to be pitied than condemned for his Personal faults. Yet to acquit him wholly would be an error, for it would leave him still cursed by the fault of miserliness. We must make him feel that he ought to rid himself of this blemish in his character."

The first juror declared that he thought a brief assignment of the accused to the Foolstool would serve that purpose. There was unanimous approval of that suggestion, though I refrained from saying anything, not knowing what the Foolstool might be. The judge then announced the verdict. The accuser's white guard accepted it instantly. The black guard, however, objected vehemently. He argued that the accused was too much in love with Earthly metals to be cured by the Foolstool. He spun over the last part of the Timestrip showing the activities of the accused after his death.

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"See how he loved his gold!" he cried. "See how he deserted not his silver bags even after he was free of the clay! Five full months he haunted his house, embraced his rotting coffers by the hour, and even went to dun

certain' debtors who had taken advantage of his demise to delay payment of their notes until the straightening of his accounts would reveal their debts. How it hurt him to see them eating heartily while their debts to him were overdue! Only after he had been dangerously weakened by soul-hunger did he give up the fight to retain his Earthly riches. We brought him here in a moment when he seemed cured of his metal-madness, fearing that he might be seized by his evil inclination again. And we have waited half this month for the trial. He will never overcome this love of Earth-metals except by experience on Earth, where he should be sent for this purpose."

The black guard had only his argument for his pains. The judge declared that the Foolstool should be given the first opportunity to cure the accused, and this verdict was put immediately into execution.

C3. In an alcove at the rear of the pavilion in which the court sat, in full sight of all in the pavilion, a plain high stool stood in front of a black sheet of crystal. The black guard, making the best of his defeat, maliciously led his charge, with a disgusting air of pomposity, toward this Foolstool, and helped him with an air of mock ceremony to climb upon it. As soon as the man was seated the black crystal was lighted up and an animated scene was exhibited in it, after the manner of the Timestrip display, although no Timestrip was now in evidence. I recognized immediately that the location of the scene was on Earth. On the roof of a brick structure of two stories a little army of creatures, closely resembling

the black guard of the man on the Foolstool, but much smaller in size, was looking up toward the floating moon, jumping up and down in evident excitement. Suddenly about every third one of the creatures fell down and remained motionless.

A second scene replaced this one in a twinkling. It was in a handsomely appointed cabin of a great ship sailing smoothly over the ocean. At a heavily laden table sat a middle-aged man and a woman of some forty-odd years, feasting royally. Two servants were hovering about and seeing to their comfort. The gourmandous couple partook heartily of champagne and revealed plainly that they were comfortable, at peace with the world, and enjoying their voyage to the fullest extent. The first scene had not visibly impressed the accused. The second one, however, caused him to squirm

uncomfortably on the Foolstool, to look about him with an air of shame and confusion, and finally to hide his face in his hands.

Quickly a third scene was substituted. In a richly furnished room a group of flashily dressed young men of fashion were gathered about a gaming table. Dice rolled back and forth over the green surface, and heaps of gold coin and bank notes changed hands with every throw. It was a lively gathering and livelier crowd, the gaiety and recklessness being auxiliarated by freely flowing liquors. Before very long it became apparent that one of the youngest of the people present was losing steadily. He kept drawing currency from his purse and throwing it upon the table, rarely ever taking enough to lose upon the next cast. He was unsteady under the influence of strong drink, and parted in a few minutes with a small fortune. This scene had the effect of causing the accused to groan in agony and finally, a picture of abject misery, to gaze piteously towards the judge and jury.

Lastly the roof of the brick structure came into view again. The creatures thereon who had not fallen in the sudden plague that overtook them were holding a grand funeral for their fallen comrades. They carried all their brethren on a huge plank atop their heads toward a hill outside the town, bent apparently on having a ceremonious burial. They were walking thus very slowly, with drooping shoulders and saddened mien, when the crystal became black once more. The judge ordered the accused to return to his place in court.

The accused now addressed the judge. He declared that he realized the folly of his mania for gold; that he regretted his niggardliness towards his wife—which had resulted in her marrying his chief business competitor; that he thought it very fitting that his hoarded gold should be spent by the two to increase his competitor’s business and provide them with surfeit of pleasures; that he was broken hearted because he had restrained his two sons unreasonably since now that they were suddenly in possession of gold they were squandering their inheritance recklessly and fell easy victims to professional sharpers.

Two things happened in the court while he was speaking. The black guard shrank until he was only two-thirds as fat as before, and a host of new people arrived and took places in front of the court. The judge declared that since the accused was rid of his miserliness, his other personal wrongs were balanced by his better qualities, and the creatures born of these

wrongs were already dead, as shown on the black crystal. The court was therefore ordered to resume its sitting as a Civil session. Immediately, the dome of the pavilion changed its color to a polychromatic opal. The procedure was the same as before, but new parts of the Timestrip were

shown; and then many people were permitted to come forward, after the exhibition of the Timestrip, who declared themselves directly interested parties on account of their own relations with the defendant on Earth or as representatives of their kin who had had such relations.

It was soon evident that the accused had not a single friend among this mass of voluntary witnesses. There wasn't a soul to say a good word for him. There was not a shred of evidence that he had ever helped a person in distress. On the contrary he was revealed as a heartless employer (whose laborers toiled seven days in the week), a pitiless landlord, an obdurate creditor, and a selfish exploiter of all with whom he had had contact by way of business. I understood that characters as rotten as this one were far from common, that most people had redeeming features in their persons. In the present case, however, the peculiar hatefulness of the man had given rise to such a feeling of resentment in all who had dealt with him that they demanded unanimously that he should be made to right their wrongs on Earth.

The black guard enjoyed a tremendous advantage over the white one now. The piety of the accused, which had been permitted to stand him in good stead in the Personal Court, was now turned against him—the black guard arguing that one who represented himself as a devoted servant of God had therefore less excuse to be a scoundrel in his dealings with the creatures of God.

When the judge placed the case in the jury's hands, it was suggested that he might be defended on the ground that he never enjoyed his own riches. Several jurors rose and addressed the witnesses, and the victims of the accused, urging them to be lenient on this basis. But there was such unanimous resentment against him, especially among those who were present to represent their kins-folk

who were yet on Earth and suffering even at the time of the trial from the grasping and oppressive acts of the accused as landlord and creditor, that a

majority of the jury felt compelled to acquiesce to the just demands of the accusers. They declared that the former miser was worthy to be sent back to Earth to right his wrongs if he would, and improve his person.

Relatives of the accused now came to the fore and appealed for mercy. They asked that during the coming reinclayment the accused should be given an escort who would preserve him from falling into greater grief. The judge refused to grant this appeal, pointing out that this would nullify any genuine opportunity for such freedom of action as would tend to improve the reinclayé's person. "The accused has failed in his last inclayment to achieve the purposes of his Earthlife," the judge concluded, "but the coming reinclayment will mean for him not only an opportunity to right his past wrongs but a second opportunity to become a perfect stellarian and a Niamesian Master. An escort as requested would void the second opportunity, which is worth the added risk. Accused is ordered to the twentieth salon in the Palace of Birth Control unless otherwise decided in the Criminal session, which will begin at once."

No sooner had the judge uttered the last words than the dome of the pavilion changed its color to a deep ruby red. The Personal Court had dealt with those deeds of the accused which were in the nature of wrongs against himself, wrongs that did violence to his own soul, and the Civil Court had reviewed such wrongs to his fellowmen as violated their natural property rights; the Criminal Court dealt with wrongs done to the persons of humans. In the last, as in the Civil Court, the victims of the accused were in fact his judges, the jurors acting

with the white guard as his defenders and, when unavoidable, affirming the just demands of the victims.

Many earnest as well as petty charges were brought against the accused, ranging from insulting his servants to causing illness in a poor family of his tenants by haw ing them put out for non-payment of rent during the winter. The white guard's defence was poor, there being little to say in favor of the accused. But the jury saved him by appealing to his victims, who were convinced that the verdict standing against him in the Civil Court made him already an unfortunate to be pitied.

That the sentence of reinclayment was regarded by all as a profound misfortune, almost the greatest of misfortunes, and certainly with more sorrow than we regard a funeral on Earth, I observed also from the

demeanors of the accused and his kinsfolk when he left for the Palace of Birth Control to await an opportunity to be born on Earth in circumstances which would enable him to come in contact with those he had wronged or their children. The real earnestness of this sentence, and the reason why such effort to avoid it was made, I understood even better when Attarokib explained it to me. He told me that the mere fact a person is assigned to stand trial in Niames in itself is a calamity to him and a source of unease to his friends—except when it is someone who passed through the Hall of Fame. It means that his expedition to Earth was a failure. His hopes of obtaining promotion are shattered: whether he shall be able to return even to his own planet is doubtful, for he has lent himself to hatred of his fellowmen instead of learning to love them. The condition of his assignment to an Earthly career was that his success should be measured by the degree in which he loved his fellowmen:—his failure, by the degree in which he lent himself to hating

Godly creatures like himself. Having returned now with anything but an admirable record—which he realizes because of his passage through the Hall of Shame—he understands the dangers of the undertaking to his own person.

He recalls the obstacles that are placed from birth in the path of any who would love all peoples. He remembers clearly the misleading character of all Earthly phenomena. He thinks back with horror on his cradle days when, even so early, he was taught to feel antagonistic to alien folk. He judges now by the weight of his own experience the impediments that minimize a person's chances of developing himself into a liberal-hearted human, a whole-souled idealist, a true friend of humankind. He knows how easy it is on Earth to err in many respects. He knows that his return to Earth means that, without his being conscious of it, he will be placed in many crucial situations in which his conduct may right one of the wrongs of his first Earthlife; and that invariably the right and ultimately advantageous course will seem at the time to be against his best interests, whilst the contrary course will seem most profitable; and that the likelihood of his choosing on Earth to sacrifice his immediate personal advantage in order to promote a hypothetical larger good will be comparatively small.

In view of the possibility of his returning after another unhappy career on Earth not only unimproved but even a greater scoundrel than at first, it is

hardly any wonder that the sentence of reinclayment is a most bitter one for him. He would greatly prefer remaining in Niames and having the opacities of his form abolished there, even at the cost of much suffering. For he would be sure at least of being able, after some years, to return to the happy life on his own planet, even if he will be

barred from visiting others; whereas a second career on Earth may result in his losing even the right to return to his native star. But when the appeals of the accused and his kinsfolk are not heeded, he must return again to Earth to risk the life-in-clay, this time for the double purpose of winning stellarian promotion and undoing the wrongs of his first inclayment.

While Attarokib was telling me this the ruby-red cupola of the pavilion was suddenly lit up by a flash of green. Seeing this, all in the court cried, "The Verdict is Just!" Immediately after that the sentenced man left the court and the color of the dome changed again to blue-white.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib. What was the meaning of the green flash?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: It was the approval of the Supreme Court, necessary for the execution of any sentence. All trials are followed in the Supreme Court. When a sentence is harsher than it should be the dome becomes black. This means that a new trial must be held, and the judge and jury that erred on the side of severity are disqualified for service in the courts for a week. There cannot be error on the side of mercy. The green flash indicates the approval of the Supreme Court. And now we shall have another trial, sitting as a Personal Court."

C4. The accused in the next trial turned out to have been a bravado and generally bad character. He had been a burglar and highwayman, as opportunity offered, in one of the countries of Eastern Europe. In the Personal Court we ordered him to a hospital to be cured of the twisted condition of certain sections of his brain after the other courts would dispose of him. In the Civil

sitting, upon intercession of both judge and jury, all who had suffered property losses at his hands forgave him, agreeing that his assignment to a hospital was the proper treatment under the circumstances. But he was not done.

It was demonstrated in the Criminal Court that in his highway robberies he had taken a fierce delight in frightening his victims, enjoying an orgy of Sadism at every opportunity. In one instance he had so frightened a woman in a coach by threatening to kidnap the little daughter who was with her that the poor mother was suffering horribly even at the very time of the trial. There was a long chain of similar atrocities, inflicted with a view to causing his victims mental agony. For this most of the sufferers, in particular the kin of the unfortunate mother whom I have mentioned, would not forgive him. The black guard, who had raged impotently when the accused was not sentenced in either of the previous courts to be reinclayed, insisted now that he should be given that sentence.

Hard though the jury tried to induce the kinsfolk of the absent victims to undertake to forgive the accused, they and a few of his victims who were present in per son declined. In justice to them it was necessary to order the accused to be reinclayed. The judge declared however, that since in the present condition of his character there could be no hope that a normal inclayment would do the accused himself any good, he would be inclayed as a low swamp animal that would often be hunted but not killed until he had lived as many years as the total years of agony suffered by his victims —during which time he would remain conscious of his identity. At the end of his term he could go to the Niamesian hospital for his cure.

Hearing the harshness of this sentence, most of the unfortunate's victims who were present forgave him in order to reduce the term of his punishment. But there was one objector—the black guard. He cried out that in his condition the inclayé would never do any wrong, and the creatures born out of his past wrongs would have no opportunity for satiation. The judge, granting the rightness of this claim, ordered the accused to find for each of those creatures a dead frog. The black guard was no more satisfied than before, but there was no sympathy for him. The flashing of a green light approve ed the sentence, and we saw the accused leave the court, sad and no little frightened.

C5. We next tried in three sittings a man who had been a professional politician of the low type. He had enjoyed a successful career in one of the

largest cities on Earth. It was shown that he had been very easy to buy, and ready to buy everyone with honors and, especally, graft. He had betrayed his people and government, had never taken a step in his political career without first calculating how much he would personally benefit by it; had lived for nothing but personal gain, under a mask of devotion to public service; had never earned an honest penny. His petty peculations and gross malfeasances were so numerous that it grew tiresome to see them unfolded by the Timestrip. In view of the testimony and appeals of many people for whom he had obtained favors that were vital to their welfare, although he had not had their good in mind but his own profit, we sentenced him, in the Personal Court, to a Niamesian hospital.

In the Civil Court there appeared, among others, a special representative for the whole country in which he had lived and demanded an accounting of all the funds

he had stolen and caused to be stolen under various pretexts from the public treasuries. The sum amounted to a staggering number of millions. He was freed of this obligation, however, both because much of this plundering was shown by the white guard to have been the only means by which certain public improvements, as the establishment of free hospitals for the poor, had been accomplished, and because it was not demonstrated that during his regime another man was willing to take his place in the government who would have behaved more honestly. But it was decreed that if within the next hundred years a professional politician more honest than he would arrive in Niames, then the present defendant would be punished according to his deserts. One of the jurors, during the discussion preceding the announcement of this verdict, remarked that it was as good as an acquittal, since there was little likelihood of a more honest politician appearing in even a thousand years. But even he admitted that this sentence was just.

In the Criminal Court, however, the ruthless conduct of the defendant with his rivals and political opponents, his fabrications of false charges against them, his falsification of public issues, won him a peculiar sentence: It was decreed that he should spend the hundred years of doubting whether he would be punished by the Civil Courts, on Earth—as a mosquito. Since he had received public money without giving any return for it, it would be his duty constantly to tour the country he had betrayed and agitate daily among the mosquitoes, exhorting them not to sting human

beings. Of course, since he would be fully conscious of his true personality during this time, there was no danger that he would do any stinging on his own account. Upon appeal of his kinsmen the court relented by saying that if he would

reform a single mosquito before the end of the hundred years, or if he would be killed by human beings, he might return to Niames at once and begin his term in the hospital without further danger of punishment in the event of the rising of an honest politician.

There was no objection to this verdict except from the black guard, and he was ignored. As the flash of green in the cupola above us indicated the approval of the Supreme Court, Attarokib offered a private comment to me:

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Ah—he will be back in a few months."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Why don't you think he will serve his century? If you suppose someone will kill him, I do not think so—people haven't the foresight to kill mosquitoes before they sting. Or do you think he will reform a mosquito?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Neither—I suppose neither. But being a politician he knows well the secret of keeping in the public eye—and he knows how easy it is to get killed that way. But while you were trying to imagine what I had thought, why didn't you suppose I supposed he would succeed in bribing his way out? That would be like him!"

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Like him to try—but as a mosquito he will have nothing to bribe with except his sting—and who will want that?"

C6. The cupola had now resumed its beautiful blue-white color and the next defendant took his place. My astonishment was great to behold my Captain Hatchet-head! Nor was I merely surprised, but embarrassed too—to sit in judgment over his acts. I mentioned this to Attarokib. He informed me that I could get myself excused

from the jury if I wished—there would be a substitute in a moment; but he advised me that there was no wrong in my serving on the jury. I determined therefore to stay. The trial went on in the usual way.

The captain was freely acquitted in the Personal session. Even his excessive drinking was declared to have been sufficiently offset by the shame he had suffered on this account in the Hall of Shame. The black guard made much of one thing—that the captain had taken pride in being a confirmed atheist, having convinced himself in his youth that there was no Creator, and adhered faithfully to this belief until the day of his demise in the clay. Upon defence of the white guard that this was not a wrong, but rather an error in judgment, the court decreed that no punishment was fitting under the circumstances. Despite protest of the black escort he was remanded to the Civil session.

Here he was speedily despatched to the next court; he had been very just and upright with his fellows and the few inadvertent wrongs recorded against him were canceled without difficulty. Then, in the Criminal Court, the same thing occurred. He had not done any killing—even in the army—for he was an engineer. There was none whom he had so treated that he held it against him now. A few slight matters were easily settled. The captain's life, by his Timestrip, had been a model of honesty, of liberalism, respect for all people, and ready helpfulness to all who needed his good services. He had even often expressed his disapproval of war and colonial oppression. An honorable acquittal was indicated, but the black guard interposed a serious objection. He pointed out that, being grown as large as the white guard, his arguments ought to carry an equal amount of

weight. When asked how he had come to grow so large despite the fine conduct of the accused he replied by saying it was due to his progenitor's atheistic hallucination.

"My honored father," the black guard declared, "had always before him a host of proofs of the existence of a Supreme Being, yet he blinded, deluded and deceived himself, wilfully denied the evidence of his own senses, and thereby poisoned his soul and darkened its light. Living this lie, and misleading others by it, his form has grown opaque and I have grown fat. Now, he gave me birth and life, and owes me support. Justice demands that he be sent back to Earth to support me or destroy me. Is there no longer justice in Anidedarta?"

There was no juror willing to agree to a sentence of reinclayment, but the judge declared that since the justice of the black guard's argument was

not refuted, he would have to call in a judge from the Court of Extraordinary Justice, to indicate what would be a proper way out of this dilemma. This official appeared immediately. The trial was reviewed, and the special judge offered us the following extraordinary decision: That, without undergoing reinclayment, the captain should be sent to the Sahara desert to count the particles of sand in it, and to do so until his black guard will grow sick of it, become a nervous wreck, and die of aggravation. Our advisor remarked that he proposed this particular punishment for the Captain because he felt sure that in counting the particles of sand in the desert the Captain will grow to understand the greatness of its Creator while at the same time his prolonged stay in the arid regions will cure him of any lingering over-love of certain liquids.

This rather witty decision was far from finding favor. The black guard raged impotently, and the relatives

of the captain, as well as a host of friends, clamor ed that it was inordinately harsh, and that his whole life was good enough to earn the Captain a full acquittal, with a term in a hospital to cure himself of his opacity. The majority of the jury, however, were satisfied that it was a good way of getting rid of the black guard, and the judge was about to pronounce the verdict when I rose to speak.

My embarrassment was great, for now all eyes were turned toward me. Though I had not done any special pleading hitherto, I put forward my best efforts to sway the court in favor of Captain Hatchet-head. I argued that the Captain's hallucination had been of a very personal sort and was hardly properly the business of a Criminal sitting. In proof of this I pointed out that he had kept his opinions to himself except when overindulgence in liquor loosened his tongue. Even then, he had always respected the opinion of those who differed with him. I deduced from this that he had cared more for his bottle than for his atheistic belief (pointing out many occasions when for a quart of good whiskey he would gladly have promised to pray matins and vespers daily,)—and I maintained that on the charge of alcoholic excesses he already stood acquitted. Since his wrong consisted rather of near-drunkenness than anything else, and since for this he had already been sufficiently punished by his own shame, I concluded by demanding a full acquittal. As for the black guard, though the Captain's

acquittal would be a death-sentence to him, what difference whether he died of aggravation or by order of the court?

To my surprise, my arguments were received with the hearty approbation of all except the black guard, and before I had resumed my seat the judge announced the

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verdict: a free acquittal, with assignment to a hospital for curing of the Captain's opacity. The black guard fell dead instantly and was born out by two officials. But the trial was by no means over. Even as the green light of approval flashed in the cupola, the Captain addressed himself to the court. He thanked ,the judge and jury, and me particularly, mentioning that he realized how fortunate he was to be freely acquitted after coming to court with a black guard as big as his white one—something that did not often happen. But he declared that he wished not to bear the stigma of his error and felt ashamed to go to a hospital to be cured of such a silly sickness as not to have believed that there is a Creator. He asked to be reinclayed and granted a free opportunity to make good his mistake by his own efforts. The court readily acquiesced, assigning him to the third salon in the Palace of Birth Control. With a final bow of thanks the captain left the court, accompanied by many friends and relatives.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: I am proud to have been of service to him—he is a wonderful man."

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: You did very well. It was for this I was ordered to have you here."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: What surprises me is that a person should be able to have his own friends and even kinsfolk on his jury!"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Why not? Our juries defend the accused anyway, since his black guard is usually a very able prosecutor. The main thing is that we try to dispose of each individual according to what will be just and acceptable to those that have claims against him—and according to what will be best for himself. Sometimes we lean too far on the side of justice—but there are checks against that also."

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C7. Though I wished to question Attarokib on this I was given no opportunity to do so then, for my attention was required at the next trial. The accused, his Timestrip indicated, had been a very rich man, the

possessor of millions and of vast power on Earth. He was charged with and found guilty of having believed himself to be a veritable god; of having been inordinately vain and proud; of having believed himself to be truly without equal on Earth in wisdom, ability, and greatness of personality; of having been always too busy to see those who needed his assistance; of having regarded his wealth as solely his own, not a trust to be expended for the good of his fellowmen. By the time he passed through the Civil and Criminal Courts I had not much hope for him. There were very few to utter a good word in his favor—he had acquired his wealth by anything but the fairest and most honorable means. I was not at all surprised that he was sentenced to live seven lives on Earth as a beggar and tramp, so that he might learn to feel sympathy for certain classes of his fellowmen whom he had despised. When the sentence was pronounced he made a motion as if to say something, but the judge cut him short with—"Not now—come later—about 250 years later—we are very busy now!" I saw him leave for the Palace of Birth Control, a sad and pitiable figure, so that I was tempted to recall my consent to the verdict and ask for a reduction of the sentence. But already the next trial was in progress.

A man who had been a poor laborer stood before us. He answered the judge's questions in a spiritless way and trembled conspicuously whilst the long list of his wrongdoings was displayed and expatiated upon by a husky black guard. Suddenly the judge put an end to the proceedings. "This man is too sick and unnerved to

stand trial," he said. "His case postponed for six months. He will remain until then in Aiatavsa to recuperate." Hearing these words, the disappointed prosecutor cried out: "But what of me? Where shall I find a place for myself until the trial?" The judge's reply was, in effect: "In the meantime you can go to Hell and warm yourself. We shall send for you in due time."

C8. While Attarokib was telling me that many who came up spiritually broken from the experiences in the clay were sent to the hospitals of Niames to recuperate, the next trial began. The accused was the greatest criminal whom we had dealt with hitherto. We had great difficulty to acquit him in the Personal session. In the Civil session even his relatives did not object to a conviction. But the worst came in the Criminal session when, among many serious crimes, murder was charged.

The accused had been a religious fanatic of the worst sort, an aggressive proselytizer, a vindictive partisan. He had incited a mob to the massacre of a small community practicing a religion not widely accepted in the land. About twenty had been killed in the assault, and more than one hundred wounded. During the trial it became clear that the accused had been wandering for years in a world of void until the last one of those wounded in the rioting had died. They were all present now, for they had to sanction whatever verdict the court might issue. The evidence of their suffering made the whole court to shudder.

The exhibition of the Timestrip and the address of his black guard were a terrible experience. He was the largest of the black guards whom I had seen in all Atomelot. There wasn't a white guard to oppose him, and for once the sympathy of the court was not with the accused.

Nevertheless judge and jury strived sincerely to take the place of the white guard and find a loophole in the black guard's charges. But it was impossible. It was shown that during the rioting the defendant, who had played the role of a holy man, was at home committing an act so atrocious that it would have been disgusting in the lowest of Earthmen. Hard though I tried, I could not find in my heart a thought in defence of the accused.

When the victims had been heard,—their unanimous demand was death—the judge and jury consulted at great length. The situation was interesting—the black guard was defending the accused, arguing against a sentence of death and in favor of reinclayment for a long term as a punishment. At my request the judge explained that this was because a sentence of death against the accused meant death also for his black guard who, though he would act as executioner, could not continue living when his progenitor's identity was destroyed. I asked further why, in this instance, we should not heed the black guard against the harsher demands of his victims. The judge patiently explained to me that in his present condition the accused could not be benefited by a return to Earth. The light of his person was all gone, there would be no impulse in him, once his past memory was obliviated, to do anything good, and he would be nothing but a willing slave of Earth's evil forces, a scourge upon his fellows.

Yet I was not satisfied. Could even murder reduce a human to such a state of hopelessness that he was no longer fit to survive in the universe? Not usually, the judge explained. When murder is committed in the heat of

terrible passion or rage or even deliberately but with a definite purpose of personal gain inspired by need—as when there is intention to rob the victim—there is no necessity

to impose death upon the murderer. The redeeming feature in the crime leaves him an opening, however slight, to recover his personal goodness, and such an opportunity is granted through reinclayment. But when murder is committed or instigated for sheer love of bloodshed, or out of calculated hatred for the victim based on differences that should be tolerated in a fellow human—differences in social position, or in nativity, or, as in the case before us, in belief—this is high crime without redeeming feature, sheer inhuman villainy that places the perpetrator on a different plane from his fellows, for he has lost the power to redeem himself. His removal from the universe is best for everyone—except his black guard.

This reasoning finally moved me, and a few jurors who like myself had hesitated to condemn a human to real extinction, to refrain from further objections. Amidst the protest of the black guard the accused was sentenced to die, and pending approval of the Supreme Court, to spend the next year in Dreampit. Instantly the doomed man was asleep and floating in the air. He was removed, and soon the next trial was ready to begin.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: There are a few things I wish to ask you. Moreover, I would like a rest from these unusual duties. Is it possible for us to retire now?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Yes—before the next trial begins. I will inform the judge."

Within a minute we had vacated our places to two new jurors.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: This place is so busy that I am distracted when I try to talk. Can't we go somewhere for a little while?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: I would suggest that we go to Aiatavsa—the land of the hospitals. On the way

there you can ask the question that is almost bursting out of you."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Does going to Aiatavsa mean farewell to the courts?"

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: No. I see you are anxious to witness a few more of our trials. As a matter of fact there are some very interesting ones that you will enjoy which I would like you to attend. So let us start for Aiatavsa at once. We will make our visit very brief. Within an hour we shall be back in Anidedarta.”

Following my guide’s signal, we gripped our girdles and the next moment were flying towards the hospitals of Niames.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
THE ISLE OF THE SICK

Concerning deadly dreams—We arrive at the hospitals—No doctors and no nurses—The man who thought I liked to lie for pleasure—How certain imps ruined his estates—The envious lady—The slanderer—The learned patients—In the park of Aiatavsa.

C1. Flying in the beautiful night-atmosphere of Niames, our speed restrained because I wanted time enough before we reached Aiatavsa to ask several questions about the courts, I began by inquiring concerning the green flash of approval in our last trial. For I wondered that the Supreme Court should approve a verdict which, as I understood, must be reviewed.

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: I am glad you asked that, since it will save you from a misunderstanding. The approval referred only to the Dreampit sentence. The death verdict must be reviewed by the Supreme Court at the end of a year, and in the meantime the whole universe will be combed for some shred of evidence in favor of the comdemned."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: But what is the Dreampit and what is the purpose of this extra punishment?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Have you ever had a frightful dream, in which perhaps you were attacked

by wild beasts, or underwent other fearsome dangers, and from which you awoke with a cold sweat covering your body? Then you had a taste of Dreampit. The convicted one, in his sleep, will repeatedly fall into the most awful nightmares in which he will experience all the sufferings of his victims. He will awake now and then only to fall in a few minutes into a more frightful dream."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: To my knowledge, the sufferings in such nightmares are worse than the real experience. What is the reason for this extra revenge upon one already too unfortunate?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: You misunderstand. The purpose of the Dreampit is neither revenge nor punishment. The dreams in it are necessary in order that they may repeat themselves on Earth to many of his followers. This often has the effect of warning them so that they mend their ways and right their wrongs—which are also the wrongs of the condemned man. He

might be saved by this means, or the term of his execution shortened. And who should give birth to the dreams which may save his misguided followers if not the one who misled them?"

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: I understand the Dreampit and its purpose now. But you seem to suggest that there is a longer or shorter term of execution?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: That is right. The condemned man's black guard is his executioner. The execution is carried out, however, in Dreampit —that is, the death of the ego is brought about by inflicting it with dreams frightful enough to produce such an effect. You can not imagine such dreams—nor can I, so don't try. But don't confuse them with the dreams inflicted for the purpose I mentioned before. Now the black

in carrying out the order of execution, has in mind that he is destroying himself too. And since the materials of which the death-dreams are composed are the deeds which brought on the sentence, the black guard follows his natural instinct of self-preservation by gathering and applying those materials as slowly as possible. By this means, and because death does not take place until all those materials are used up, the execution may be prolonged."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: You have a marvelous way of making things plain. Yet I wonder whether the purpose of the executional process could not be carried out in a more merciful manner?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: It could not, otherwise you may be sure it would be. But how shall I explain it to you? Have you ever seen a farmer in your native land driving a wagon loaded with straw?"

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Certainly, I used to see it often in my youth."

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Then you surely noticed stalks falling singly off the pile. Now if a single stalk were to fall with its spike up, it would mean the destruction of all the world."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: I know you too long now to doubt your wise teachings. Yet it seems a strong if not a mystical statement to say that if a stalk of straw fell with its head up it would make such an upheaval in the cosmos."

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: That statement is nevertheless a simple truth. For nature was so ordered that an object falling toward Earth must fall with

its heavy side down. To reverse that law even in the case of an insignificant straw would require the reversal of all the cosmic laws."

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"Sepsafem to Attarokib: I see now what you mean."

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: And so it is with such a criminal as we convicted tonight. The consequences of his misdeeds are according to natural law. Such suffering as he may experience is simply the natural outgrowth of his conduct according to the profoundly complicated operations of the laws of the universe. To alter his fate might require the reversal of the whole course of nature and would involve suffering for millions of other beings. And there is no reason why they should be made to suffer for the sake of a criminal who, if he really is ordered to die, has certainly conducted himself so that no punishment can be too severe for him."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: This principle is clear to me. I know the operations of the inexorable laws of nature under which an Earthman might be killed for such a seemingly slight thing as an error in judgment of balance upon a rooftop. But you have spoken a moment ago in a manner of doubting whether the man we sentenced would really be ordered to die?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Because there is a chance that some good in him, perhaps something very insignificant, may be found in the universe. That would mean that he may rehabilitate himself—on which chance the Supreme Court would grant him a reinclayment. There is another chance that he may be saved—even in the midst of his execution. It happens sometimes that the deeds of the Earthmen of some locality have given birth to such forces as can express themselves only through the appearance of a tyrannous, murderous, merciless ruler. Of course no ego can be found to go down to Earth to be born so that he will develope into such a lowly person. Hence a convict of this sort is withdrawn from

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his execution and assigned to that position. He becomes the arch tyrant and vicious oppressor of multitudes. But this is his opportunity. If he wilfully refuses to serve the purpose of his inclayment; or if, in the powerful position which he attains, he conducts himself mercifully even in his tyranny; then his life is surely saved. This thing has happened. But it has more often occurred that the convict sent down for this purpose performed

his cruel functions more thoroughly than was necessary. And although he could receive no additional punishment, he was returned to his place directly after his Earthly demise for the execution of the original sentence. The fact is that these arch criminals have lost the human quality in their beings and cannot be retained in the human family. If they had not lost this quality they would surely be saved from death."

I recalled some of the scenes I had watched upon the Timestrip of the sentenced man. I had shuddered at the sight of women and children and old men hacked alive to pieces by frenzied maniacs. I had seen the suffering caused to thousands of the kindred or these victims. The crime of the man who had intelligently instigated such atrocities and unspeakable brutalities was one that could not be wiped out in many centuries. It was a crime against God and humanity. I pictured to myself how I would feel if a mob of fanatics, under the false inspiration of a wild belief, was to descend upon those dear to me and torture to death the helpless members of my family because we had withheld from adopting that belief. I could not regret the possible fate of the man who had incited the mob to this savage orgy.

While I was communicating this thought to Attarokib we alighted in Aiatavsa, which had been in sight some time.

C2. In a vast park, many thousands of miles in extent, were the hospitals of Niames. Aiatavsa consisted of this extensive domain, dotted heavily with handsome trees on which grew fruit and flowers together, and wherein more than six hundred buildings of tremendous proportions were situated. My awe at sight of these structures knew no bounds. Some of them occupied two square miles of park surface and rose up three hundred stories high. At any other time or under different conditions I should have dreaded to stand in the shadow of such gigantic tower houses.

Through an archway and into one of these huge hospital-buildings, all white, we walked, noticing an inscription which stated that this House of Aiatavsa was reserved for those who suffered from personal opacity resulting from Personal transgressions. The inside of the hospital, walls, ceilings, floors, and handsome appointments, was like the outside—all white. As we proceeded through the corridors I observed hundreds of rooms, all furnished upon the same plan, occupied by single patients. In a few of the rooms I could see a visitor. There was nothing by which I could identify who were the doctors and who were the patients, for all the people

I saw, men and women, were alike except for their different degrees of translucency and opacity.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Ought we not to ask permission before proceeding upon our investigations?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: There is no rule against visitors. We may go where we wish in order to learn what we wish. The whole institution of Aiatavsa is based upon the idea of acquiring knowledge. It would perhaps be more appropriate to call this a college than a hospital."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: A college?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Yes, exactly. A patient who comes here learns all he can about his malady or maladies. When he has taught this to other patients he is cured."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: But what then is left for the doctors to do?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Nothing. And as there are no doctors here, you are relieved of another worry.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: You will be telling me next that there are no nurses either?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: That will be unnecessary since you have already said it yourself."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Good. No doctors and no nurses. How then is knowledge acquired here, and how are the patients—or should I say students—cured?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: That's what we came here to learn. Now this room is unoccupied. The patient—let us call him that for convenience—must be in the park. He will not mind if we make free with his room. Let us use it."

The door was open. As we entered I saw that the furnishings were few and simple. There were two comfortable chairs facing a wall in which a crystal plate, about two yards square, was set. On the wall facing the door hung a large leaf taken from a tree in the park. It was the first thing I examined, for I found it covered with a curious form of writing made by cutting through the leaf.

No sooner had I conceived the desire to understand what this writing might be than it became clear to me—and I recognized the process as another manifestation of the power of the free mind by which I had been able to understand the flowers in Mikahes. The leaf turned out

to be an interesting diagnosis of the malady of the room's occupant, inscribed in the first person.

"I was a filthy liar," it read. "I spoke things that had no trace of truth in them for the sheer pleasure of lying, and I took advantage of my respectability to make people believe me. Though I knew that my lies made a nuisance and a pest of me, so that I was often tempted to begin speaking truthfully, I could not control my inclination to fabricate out of the whole cloth when in the company of my fellow beings. This is my malady." The leaf concluded with the name of the patient, a list of the places he had visited on Earth, and the number and duration of his inclayments.

Having finished the perusal of this simple diagnosis I turned to address Attarokib. I found him in conversation with a person who had entered without my noticing it. This was the occupant of the room, who greeted me freely with a polite "Good health to you, friend."

"I hope I am not intruding?" I replied, falling into my host's free manner of intercommunication.

"Not at all. Your friend tells me you would like to learn about my type of malady. I shall be glad to operate my displayer for your benefit."

"Thank you very much."

At my host's suggestion I seated myself in one of the chairs. The crystal plate on the opposite wall immediately began displaying many scenes in which my host was engaged in telling lies. I would have been greatly embarrassed to see them had I not discovered from his chance remarks, that my host was under the impression that I was interested in his malady because I too suffered from it! To spare his feelings I did not undeceive him, and for my considerateness I benefited by my host's lecture on his malady—delivered on the assumption

that I needed instruction on the subject of lying.

He was a model of kindness and thoroughness, and a very able teacher. I could see that he knew the art of lying from all its angles. His lecture was based on the scenes of the displayer, which showed not only each lie but also what happened to the replicas produced by it. He approved my interest in these replicas and showed me on the displayer how some of them, which were born out of foolish and harmless lies, had nevertheless caused him a

regrettable loss. These replicas, in the form of misshappen and ugly little imps of various colors, had arrived in one of the departments of Mikahes where they were classified as being strictly personal property of their progenitor and, on this basis, were sent to await their master in various personal properties belonging to him in the interior of Mikahes. The scenes of the displayer showed how these little imps arrived at several beautiful palaces—which, my host told me, belonged to him—and proceeded to make themselves at home. For sport they went around breaking windows (sighs from my host), smashing wonderful ornaments (more sighs), knocking down walls (sighs and sighs), cutting down trees in splendid orchards (very heavy sighs) and in general reducing their abodes to desolate ruination. There were servants present, resembling the white guards I had seen in Atomelot; who kept rebuilding what the imps destroyed, but I could see that it was a discouraging business.

"When I am completely cured and out of here," my host exclaimed vehemently, "I am going over there to drown all those imps. That's how it is with lying—even if it doesn't harm anyone else, your lie strikes back at you. Well, they're my imps, I gave them life, and I

can't complain if they have been shipped to my properties."

"I suppose you must have thought that harmless lies were just—harmless?" I remarked.

"Yes. Isn't that what you supposed? It reminds me of the time when I managed a rubber plantation in Africa. (Have you ever been in Africa? Interesting, but hot for a white man. But let me tell you this story.) We used to pay the native workers at the rate of two shillings for each barrel of rubber they filled during the season. But we payed only at the end of the season, and temporarily gave each worker a copper half-pence for each barrel, instructing him to return it at the end of the season. By then the workers would be entitled to twice as many shillings as he has half-pence. But the ignorant natives, as we anticipated, could not resist 'stealing' a few of the copper coins. Now this lying business strikes me as being the same thing. When I see the damage my lies have done me I feel that each one of them represents a copper half-pence that I 'stole', and lost gold and silver treasure by it."

My host's story was not a revelation to me—since I knew Africa so well. I was amazed, however, by the comparison he made between himself and his former black laborers in point of ignorance. This indicated an amazing change of attitude in a former manager of an African plantation.

The display of the harmless lies came to an end with a scene of beautiful stained windows smashing to pieces as they fell down to the ground from a high tower. I thanked my host again, and he politely offered to render me any assistance in his power toward curing myself of

opacity resulting from harmless lying. With a final "Good Health" Attarokib and I departed.

C3. "Sepsafem to Attarokib: This was a most informative visit—though I am afraid I shall have some smashed windows on account of the deception I practiced in allowing my host to think me afflicted with his disease."

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Sometimes it is better to allow a few of one's windows to be smashed than to embarrass a fellow-being—don't you think?

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Sort of white lie, eh? Most likely. Well, where to, now?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Let's enter any room on the next story. Choosing at random we are likely to find an interesting disease or patient."

According to this plan we entered a room occupied by a handsome lady who received us very politely and, being informed that I should like to investigate her malady, showed me her diagnosis, inscribed upon a leaf.

This diagnosis read: "I was an envier, a shrunkenhearted, unreasonable envier. I could not bear to see anyone living and having his own share of life. If any of my friends had a new dress, or bought a new piece of furniture, I could not sleep nights for jealousy over it. I cursed them in my heart and wished them dead rather than enjoying such things. The worst of it was that I had everything I needed, scarcely ever felt the want of something. But the feeling of envy was always in me, without any reason or excuse. I could not bear to see any of my friends happy. It seems that I

wished to be the only person in the world beautiful, clever, rich, happy, and admired whilst all others were ugly, stupid, tattered,

unhappy and unnoticed. It was crazy, mean, and worthless. This is my malady."

Such frank self-diagnosis, I thought, was surely admirable. Indeed, I suspected that perhaps it was exaggerated. But when the good lady showed us some scenes upon her displayer I saw that she had only written the truth. When I asked what the punishment for this wrong was, she replied that the punishment was all in herself—in the unhappiness and misery she had suffered through her unwarranted envy, and in the difficulty of curing the heart and head opacity that had taken place in her form.

It was in this room that I discovered that there was no Timestrip behind the crystal displayer. My hostess explained that the secret of the scenes in it lay in the chairs. As soon as someone sat down upon one of them the fact was known in a central department, and the scenes were immediately despatched to the room.

Following this interesting visit we left the white building and entered one that was all blue. This hospital, I learned, was for the cure of maladies incurred by banning others. A short stay with one of the patients in his room was most instructive. His leaf of diagnosis read: "I was a gossiper. I liked to speak and hear ill of everyone I knew even slightly, though I had no benefit out of it. As soon as I heard of anyone who had done something worthwhile I made it my business to belittle him, to soil his character, besmirch his reputation, and drag his name into the mud. Ofttimes I felt that I was a skunk who had no right to stay near people because I befouled the air. But nothing could keep me from spreading slanderous gossip the next time I got a hearer. No one alive on Earth was good enough to escape my tongue

as if I myself were irreproachable. It was foolish, poisonous, ugly. This is my malady."

The consequences of this patient's wrongs were shown upon his displayer. We saw how wondrous estates belonging to him were transferred to those whom he had slandered. But our host's regret was not based on these losses. "These transfers are merely a matter of form," he declared. "It is justice. I would be happy on account of it, rather than sad. The trouble is that it does not cure me of my opacity. For that I must stay here—I cannot tell how long."

By this time my curiosity concerning the manner of curing these odd diseases was roused to a high pitch. I questioned my host concerning it. He informed me that the first step in curing oneself is personally to obtain pardon from the wronged persons. Sometimes many years are necessary to do this if there are many pardons to seek and not all the wronged persons are in Niames. The second step is to make good the wrongs—which often requires transfer of desirable Niamesian treasures. The third step is the study of the disease until it is known in all its forms, under the supervision of a fellow-patient more advanced in the study of the same disease, and through attending lectures on it by the most advanced patient. Each of these steps, when accomplished, results in having certain replicas created by the wrong, and surviving on Earth, withdrawn and destroyed; this resulting in the increased translucency of the patient.

Then comes the fourth step—to help others to cure themselves. By the time a patient's translucency is well advanced, he finds a new arrival and becomes his teacher—even as another patient has been teaching him. The teacher must not only instruct his pupil, but assist him to regain translucency by transfusions of his own improved

light. Thus each patient, as soon as he is on the road to being cured, is daily transfusing part of his light to his pupil, and receiving transfusions from his teacher. It is a curious but very practical arrangement. No patient is cured until he has cured at least one fellow-patient completely.

Finally comes the fifth and last step. Being himself cured and having cured a fellow-patient, he must study his malady from a higher viewpoint until he can contribute an original thought that will help all his fellow-patients in the same department. When this has been done, in the form of a public lecture, the patient is discharged.

Our host very kindly consented to accompany us to one of the lecture halls where these thoughts of the cured patients were contributed. In* a

salon occupying the entire uppermost story of the hospital a large audience was seated, listening attentively to the lecturer on the platform. He was reciting the story of his malady and his cure.

"To understand thoroughly the reason why our malady exists, to understand the reason why the deeds or thoughts or words for which we were committed to Aiatavsa were wrongs," he was saying, "is essential before we can be cured. Now I have been here many years seeking such understanding of my malady, which was that I took pleasure in humiliating those who chose to suffer and be martyrs in some unpopular ideal cause. When I saw a person in misfortune, suffering because he would not surrender to the forces opposing his ideal, I used to laugh at him, to call him fool, to hold him in contempt. I took the attitude that if his ideal were worth anything the world would accept rather than reject it, honor rather than deride its upholder. I held that worthwhile things were suitably rewarded in the natural course

of events, hence the fact that a person was suffering for any ideal was proof that that ideal must be worthless, and the person suffering for it a fool who should be humiliated until he sees the error of his position.

"My error lay in failing to understand a certain natural law, and this is the thought I would contribute for your consideration. The law I have in mind is the one by which a person who labors at bleaching linen is himself made black by the same sun that makes his linens white. So the idealist who upholds a good cause is himself required to suffer for upholding it—and the fact that he suffers is no proof that his ideal is worthless. His suffering is merely the price of upholding his ideal. The person who humiliates the idealist is therefore doubly wrong—in wronging the idealist and in traducing his ideal; and this is the cause of the opacity that sets in his form. I sincerely hope that this thought will aid all who are suffering from the disease of which I was cured to understand their malady better and to cure themselves. I have spoken."

The conclusion of the lecture was followed by a good deal of discussion among those who were interested in this particular malady. I left the lecture hall in Attarokib's company, and he took me next to the headquarters of Aiatavsa, a huge building in which sat the Board of Hospitallers. Here we watched many new patients being examined, writing out their own

diagnoses, assigned to rooms in the proper Hospitals, and given a fellow-patient for a teacher.

C4. In one large room I saw the most advanced patients examining the progress of their fellows. One patient, who complained that after many years he found that certain opaque spots in his heart were not yielding

to treatment, was a subject of particular interest. As I watched his examination a curious thought occurred to me. One patient-doctor was holding his wrist, while another had placed his brow over the difficult subject's heart. They ordered the patient to imagine himself back on Earth, living a day's life there. From their conversation I judged that by this means they were following the patient's thoughts during a day of his life on Earth. One of them very kindly explained to me that if they kept this up long enough they would ultimately discover what particular mode of thought had caused these stubborn opaque spots—which it was essential to know before a cure was possible.

The curious thought that occurred to me was this; that our medical practices on Earth were in a degree similar to those of Aiatavsa. Thus, our doctors also hold the patient's wrist, and listen to his heart. There is, of course, also a vast difference. The doctors of Aiatavsa seek through this to discover the reason underlying a malady while our doctors merely seek to discover the symptoms of it—and, very often, they do discover that the patient is sick.

Attarokib assured me that medical practices on Earth are really imitations of the methods of Aiatavsa, vaguely remembered, or vaguely received as messages from Mikahes. A marked difference is therefore inevitable. He called my attention to the diagnosis. In Aiatavsa it is the patient who makes the diagnosis; on Earth it is the doctor. In Aiatavsa the first principal is that the patient's malady is the result of some false mode of thought, which probably led to some form of misconduct. The whole theory of the cure in Aiatavsa therefore follows the principle of discovering the false mode of thought and eradicating it. On Earth our doctors go

as far as advising their patients to alter certain lines of conduct, but they have not yet arrived at the stage of seeking for the inimical thought-cause

of the human diseases.

In wandering through the hospitals and lecture halls of Aiatavsa I met an advanced patient who assured me that it would be possible for a person almost to immunize himself against all diseases of body and spirit by following a mode of thought and action from which all that is not good is excluded. And until the doctors of Earth can teach us how to think and act so wholesomely all our days that we shall not fall victims of horrible diseases and infect our children with them, he added, they shall not be more than Aimedratian imitators of the medical masters of Aiatavsa.

I asked my informant whether he did not think the doctors on Earth had achieved a good deal in classifying human diseases and their remedies as much as they have. He replied, with a smile, that to determine whether a patient is suffering from rheumatism, or diarrhea, or fever, or consumption should be only the alphabet of medicine—that this was merely giving names to certain combinations of symptoms. He told me a very amusing story to illustrate his point.

"A certain old practitioner," he said, "was a fixture in the little village where I lived. One day the police fished out of the river a corpse in a rather decayed state. They brought it to this oldest doctor in town, who was, incidentally, rather hard of hearing, and asked him to determine the probable age of the drowned person, and how long he had lain in the water. After half an hour with the corpse the old doctor came out of his study and declared with emphatic wisdom that the body was undoubtedly of the male sex! Now for a doctor to say

that his patient has rheumatism is not doing much more than that old physician did. Does he know what is at the root of the patient's rheumatism? Even applying medicines is only a palliative measure. The primary business of the doctors should be the abolition of all disease by teaching people how to think!"

Being in no position to discuss this subject with equal profundity, I thanked my learned informant and went for a walk in the park. Here I saw thousands of the patients strolling over the grounds, examining the trees and the inscriptions upon them. Imitating them, I soon discovered that the fruit of each tree was good for the cure of some particular malady. The patients of the hospital were going around discussing their various diseases and inquiring of one another whether they knew where there was a tree

suitable for the cure of this or that malady. One of them directed such an inquiry to me. Though I could not inform him I held him in conversation for awhile.

I asked him what particular part the fruit of these millions of trees played in the cure of the patients. He told me that the fruit restored strength lost in transfusing light. In conversing with him I discovered that he too held the doctors of Earth in great contempt, and when I inquired as to the cause he was glad to explain it.

Once, he told me, he pricked his finger with a needle. The result was that a poison set in, and before six months were past, after unspeakable sufferings, the doctors cut off his finger, his hand, and his arm. "Heaven knows how much more of me they would have removed if I hadn't died during the third operation."

"But," I replied, "perhaps it was really necessary?"

"Not at all. Since I came here I have learned that there are medicines on Earth, in the various minerals and

plants, for everything, and that cutting up a person's body should be unnecessary. You know there are any number of plants, unsuitable as food, for which no use is known. Every one of these has in it valuable medicinal qualities—if only the Earth doctors would investigate them all to discover the purpose of each! But no! They cut off a person's hand or foot as if it were a slice of bread!"

"At least you should be consoled now for the loss of your hand on Earth," I remarked, "since you have recovered it here."

"Recovered it? Why, I never lost it! Of course the instruments of Earth cannot cut up the ego. If a hand is removed, the ego form of that limb simply shrinks into the body. If an eye is removed or blinded, the power of sight which was exercised through it simply manifests itself in another way —by the increased power of the other eye, for instance. But if I still have both hands it is not due to the skill of the Earth doctors."

To this I could offer no reply. I therefore left my indignant acquaintance to search for his suitable herb and asked Attarokib what we should do next.

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: That depends on you. If you are satisfied with what you have seen and heard at Aiatavsa we may return to the courts."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Doubtless there is very much more I could learn here. But I am very eager to be present at a few of the interesting trials you

promised roe, so let us return to Anidedarta."

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Very well. We will make haste this time and be there in a few minutes."

Upon this we gripped our girdles and soared once more towards the island of justice where, as my guide had promised, we arrived in less than five minutes.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN
EIGHTEEN TRIALS

The debaucher—The men who mistreated their wives—The Women's Courts—The courtesan—The man who swindled in vain—The Jew—The liar and his monkey. The hero who was promoted to be a Field Marshal—The judgment of the upright judge—The author—The three suicides—The man who would lead a dog's life—The verdict of death—The hypocrite's kissing game—The fair sailor—The Chinese, the negro, and the provocateur—The convert.

C1. We alighted before one of the pavilions of justice and entered immediately. We found a trial just finishing, and from the events that passed it was evident that the accused had been convicted of having debauched and criminally assaulted several girls and women.

Before sentence was pronounced the poor wretch was shown, upon the Foolstool, the future generations that were to be born of the females whom he had ruined. Without exception they were angrily fanning their fists against the convict. He was shown also the horrible female creatures resembling his black guard who were born out of his every crime.

Some of these beings were actually brought into the court, and I never in my life saw or imagined anything as frightfully ugly as these creatures born out of the pain, shame, indignity and suffering of the convict's

assaulted victims. They were held in a large transparent case tightly closed up. Attarokib declared that they were kept thus to prevent their obnoxious odor from offending the purity of the Niamesian atmosphere. No sooner did they espy the convict than the repulsive creatures began wildly to exhibit a strong affection for him, an unmistakable desire to approach near him and embrace him—the mere thought of which made me sick nearly to swooning. I felt cold and shriveled over my whole person, but, glancing at the convict, I beheld a sight so pitiable, so miserable, that I forgot all about my own discomfort.

The sentence was brief—two words expressed it—"cage him." But it was not uttered until a long time after the complete guilt of the accused was established. There were many appeals for mercy, and pleas by the convict's relatives and by a number of his friends to the kin of his victims for

forgiveness. But the latter were immovable. Their wrath was terrible. There was no mercy in them for the convict. I understood from the proceedings that the jurors had already done their utmost for the accused and had won some very slight concessions. The other pleaders for the convict had only their pains for their reward. Nothing less than caging would satisfy the kin of the victims, and that sentence was finally executed.

The convict was dropped into the cage of the beings whose horrible personality I have only hinted at, it being really indescribable. These ladies manifested unmistakably their pleasure at receiving him into their midst. But it was even plainer to see that the convict might almost have preferred death to this frightful experience. The man caged, the whole box of viciousness was removed from our presence, much to my relief.

Attarokib, somewhat reluctantly I judged, told me the full details of this punishment. The convict was doomed to live for a time in the cage, which would be held upon the island of Hatefat during this entire period. Finally, when the death of the caged vixens occurred, his soul would be withdrawn from the ego and his ego, reduced in size, would be turned over to the Department of Wild Beasts to be inclayed in a savage animal. This animal was destined to be captured alive, caged all its days and not permitted to lead even the normal life of a wild beast, for as many inclayments as he had committed assaults. Finally, perhaps only after many centuries, the ego and soul would be reunited and permitted to cure themselves in Aiatavsa. The only likelihood of shortening the term of this sentence was to obtain the forgiveness of his victims and their kin. This might be almost impossible, since the wrath of the kin of assaulted women is traditionally unappeasable.

When I expressed the thought that this is a cruel and harsh punishment, my guide asssured me that the convicted one had barely escaped the sentence of death. He explained that this man had sought to profit financially by the sale of his victims into a life of shame. He remarked, too, that the severity of the sentence was the convict’s best hope that the kin of his victims would relent.

C2. Later I witnessed the trials of smaller offenders against womanhood. There were people charged with beating their wives, or with treating them like soulless beasts, mercilessly, cruelly, or insultingly. Some of these were sentenced to be inclayed with such physical defects as would deprive them

of the possibility to marry and live as normal men. Some were sentenced to be inclayed as.

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perfectly normal men but destined to marry women who would teach them the meaning of maltreating a human being. One such man was met at the exit of the pavilion by the very creature who was to punish him. She placed her arm through his with all the coquetry of an effectionate bride and led him forth, smiling and clinging to him so that all in the court were forced to laugh at this sight. Her mannerisms had all the suggestion of "Leave him to my tender attentions—I shall take such good care of him—."

I sat through one case, in a different pavilion, in which the accused, found guilty of having tortured several women, got off quite easily. The greatest wonder of it was that the parents and other kin of the victims were not present to insist upon punishment befitting the severity of his crime.

The accused had been a Mohammedan native of some province in India. He had four wives whom he treated, according to the customs of that remote country, worse than his mules. The Timestrip showed that he had tortured them before they were ten years old. At twenty his victims were old women—at thirty, hags, due to his abuse of their persons, the hard labor he had imposed upon them, the inadequacy of his provisions for their welfare, and the frequent beatings he had administered to them in the capacity of lord and master.

Probably I had not such a judicial view of the proceedings as others in the pavilion; at any rate, I felt a strong desire, several times during the exhibition of his Timestrip, to administer a well deserved thrashing to the rascal whose life it depicted. As usual, however, though this time to my surprise, there was another side to the story. The Mohammedan's white guard offered the defense

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that he had lived as a pious Moslem is required to live. He had obeyed the Koran faithfully (excepting in certain instances when it threatened to be expensive), had visited the Mosque regularly, and had been led to look

forward to a very bright paradise in which he would enjoy the fruits of his pious and prayerful life.

Judge and jury held a brief conference, after which the former inquired of the accused whether, by the fruits of his pious and prayerful life, he had in mind the seven beautiful houris that should be waiting for him in Anidedarta as a well earned recompense. Upon this the face of the former Moslem lighted up, for the question seemed to indicate that his defense had struck a responsive chord. As he nodded his affirmative the presiding judge said with sublime gentleness, "You shall have them, brother Ali-Hadudah, and at once."

In a moment, a deputation of seven beauties appeared in the court, and without any delay they surrounded the surprised Hindu and took him in charge. When I saw the shapes and features of these paradise girls, and their horrible embracing of unlucky Ali-Hadudah, I did not wonder that he screamed out a volley of protests and tried, vainly, to escape from their tender caresses. Right then I resolved that hap what may I would never embrace the Mohammedan faith—even though the promised number of houris were multiplied by seven times.

After the seven disgusting houris had removed their charge from the pavilion I gathered from Attarokib that he would remain in their clutches only for the total sum of the years that he tortured his unfortunate wives. Afterwards he would have to stand trial for certain other charges against him. But he was safe from severer punishment on he basis of his crimes against womanhood because

such treatment of wives is common in his land, and neither his victims nor their kin had expected anything else, or resented his conduct, or had behaved so much better themselves that they could appear in Anidedarta as complainants against him. The fathers of Ali-Hadudah's wives were themselves under punishment at this time for their treatment of the mothers of these victims.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: And what of the women so vilely abused by these brutes? Why are they subjected in the first place to birth in circumstances that force them to be wives of such devils as that brute we have just seen?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Many of those women are persons who have been convicted in the Women's Courts of very grave offences. Instead of

committing them to other punishments they are inclayed as the wives of such men in certain lands on Earth. It is the greatest punishment that can be inflicted upon an evildoing woman, and is substituted sometimes for a sentence of death. Once she has gone through such a life even those whom she wronged most terribly in her first inclayment will forgive her."

C3. I was much interested, upon hearing this, to see for myself the proceedings of the Women's Courts. I found them organized upon the same plan as the Men's Courts, but women were the judges and jurors, women who had distinguished themselves on Earth by lives of devotion to good deeds and noble ideals. I did not happen at this time to attend at any trials of extraordinary interest, unless it was one of a courtesan who, more than a century ago, had influenced the lives of two kings and the destiny of a nation.

That there was much of both good and bad in her the Timestrip revealed plainly. When her defence began, which was based upon the thesis that the morality of her generation had left her no other course, the judge and jury wept copiously during the recitation of her sufferings. I grew impatient at the spectacle and left, being certain anyway that there would be an acquittal upon the major charge, though she might be found guilty of having caused much suffering to the common people of the land. Later, however, I reflected upon my conduct and decided that I had been too hasty in giving way to impatience. I should have understood, I realized, that it was a matter of woman's justice in Niames; and what could be more just?

Most of the trials of women that I heard had to do with charges of nagging, gossiping, vanity, extravagance, neglect of children, and other such wrongs which were called diseases in Anidedarta. The sentences, where guilt was established, consisted of curative terms in Aiatavsa. When wives who had betrayed their husbands were tried in Criminal sittings, the usual sentence was inclayment in one of the Mohammedan or Hindu countries—the most dreaded of women's punishments. But even in these cases I found, rather to my surprise, that the convicted women were not excessively grief-Stricken if assured that they would have the privilege of motherhood.

C4. Returning to the Men's Courts, I witnessed more than fifty trials, all interesting, many highly amusing. I select only a few varied cases to illustrate the spirit and style of Niamesian justice. During the trial of a swindler and common thief, it was demonstrated that he could easily have earned by honest means as

much, and at the same time, as he got by his swindles and robberies. It was a simple matter of choice, and he had elected crime to be the means of his livelihood. He felt extremely foolish when shown that for each sum acquired by treachery and stealth there was a like sum waiting which he would have gotten by honest effort. His sentence was to serve one inclayment as a pauper who would always arrive just too late to better his fortunes. After this he would have to make good their losses to all whom he had robbed, and pacify them for the anguish they had suffered when he betrayed them or stole from them.

C5. During the trial of a Jew, the accused pleaded guilty to a charge of having failed to live by the laws of his race, of having wilfully evaded his personal racial duties. Among the specific transgressions recorded against him were smoking on the Jewish Sabbath, which is prohibited to Jews, eating upon holy fast days, holding in contempt his religion's prayers, neglecting to read his psalms daily, and a host of other transgressions the earnestness of which I was at a loss to understand. Moreover, he had been such a poor wretched soul that there was no case against him in the Civil Court. In extenuation of the transgressions charged, his white guard offered the defence that he had been a poor man all his life, had suffered greatly during life-in-clay, and had been living in Eastern Europe where he was gravely persecuted for being a Jew. But as the charges in the Personal Court were very earnest he asked as a matter of mercy that he should be punished by anything at all, rather than by a return to Earthly Hell.

But the court pronounced the dreaded punishment. The accused was convicted of not being a good Jew and

sentenced to serve one lifetime as a Jew in Russia. The Jew seemed to know much better than I what this meant, for his sorrow was really pitiful to see. He took it quite hard at first and tried to argue and persuade the

judges to be more lenient, many relatives and friends joining him. But when the court appeared obdurate he swallowed his disappointment and became calm and resigned. I thought it very practical of him to make peace so readily with his fate once it became evident that his appeals were futile. I was quickly enlightened. The presiding judge had been scrutinising the convict and now suddenly added that the convict's whole inclayment would have to be served in Russia and that particularly he was to have no opportunity to emigrate to America or England.

No sooner had the judge uttered this qualification of the sentence than the convict began again to plead for reconsideration. I understood now why he had so quickly resigned himself to reinclayment. But the judge had seen his scheme and forestalled it.

C6. Following this trial I was present at the arraignment of one whose chief characteristic was lying. He had been an inveterate liar, had wallowed in falsehood even when no gain to himself was concerned. He had lied for the sake of lying. But what rang serious about it were the consequences which appeared in the Civil Court—he had wrought harm to many by his lies even though he had been innocent of ill intentions. He was sentenced to chum for ten years with a little pink monkey so that he might see in its actions the mirroring of his petty prevariations, then to go for a cure to Aiatavsa, and finally to make good all his wrongs in various ways.

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C7. The next trial to which Attarokib led me was one he especially selected as most likely to interest me. I found the court busy with a person of my own rank, a soldier, an officer, and a gentleman. Moreover, he had distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in action many times. I must confess that I had much less pleasure than interest in seeing the different humans stand trial in the courts of Niames. How much more so this applied in the case of one of my own kind may be imagined. The nature of the accusations against him, which grew out of his conduct as a soldier, made me feel truly uncomfortable.

His Timestrip showed him to have been a hero indeed. But it was plain that he was even a greater fool, utterly irresponsible, a source of danger to others. Not that he was malicious in his conduct with his fellow-men—but he had a mania for citations, medals and honors, and he was therefore

reckless of the lives of his men. He was seen taking his company into fights where there was clearly no need for their presence. He led them into any number of unnecessary dangers. It was true that he risked his own life as freely as that of his men. Invariably he was to be seen in the thickest of the fighting. But most of the time he was aware that small good could be expected out of the risks and sacrifices he took with his company. He had only one end in view—to win citation for bravery. He was overjoyed when his company broke through a terrific fire to dislodge the enemy from some little hill, even if the hill was of no importance and would have to be evacuated soon because its position was untenable. He thought all the losses worth the exhibition of courage; he believed it payed to expose his troop to exceptional dangers in order to earn for himself and for them a reputation of unequaled daring.

The list of his decorations was undenyably impressive enough for any military man to be proud of. The Timestrip revealed, however, that it was by unfailing good fortune rather than by his intelligence that he had survived again and again to receive his seventeen medals. His men had enjoyed no such charmed lives. Hundreds and hundreds of them had paid dearly for his futile heroics, leaving at home countless suffering families and broken hearts. Many had suffered wounds, and many were maimed for the rest of their Earthlife.

This was one of the hardest cases for the courts to decide. The man before them had behaved like an archcriminal. There was a mass of people who asked the extreme penalty for him. But he had undoubtedly been, above all, a chump and an empty-headed simpleton, who had valued a cross of bronze more than ten human lives. I could not help laughing to see him on the Timestrip standing before his General, his chest threatening momentarily to explode out of his tightly buttoned and bemedaled coat. For the life of me I was not sure whether he should be ordered killed or given a rattle to play with. At any rate, excepting for his criminal disregard of his own and his men’s lives, he had been a fine fellow.

I believe the inclination of the court was strongly toward acquitting him of the criminal charges. But there were over five hundred men present who had been killed under his irresponsible leadership. There were hundreds who had been crippled for the sake of his decorations. There were several thousand who had suffered because the welfare of those killed and maimed

men had been vital to them also. They were righteously angry to have been made victims of this man's insane lust for medalions. Their demands for justice and retribution

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were not to be denied. But how punish a man foolish to the point of madness?

Fortunately a very wise Niamesian was the presiding judge in this pavilion. He found a way out. He explained to the victims that they would have to demand justice of those higher up in the military ranks than this officer. Their complaints must be made against those who had entrusted him with a commission and encouraged him by commending and rewarding his bravery. They alone, the judge argued, following the lead of the white guard, were guilty of the crimes in which the present defendant had been an unintelligent instrument; and the proper place for the latter was in a hospital in Aiatavsa, where he must ultimately be sent for a cure. But for the present the judge proposed to dispose of him in such a way that his victims would get some satisfaction out of him. A war on Earth was brewing to break forth, in about sixty years, wherein the children of the defendant's victims would be forced to participate. The accused, the judge proposed, should therefore be reinclayed at once in a military family of the country that will make war upon the land of his present victims; and his career should be guided so that he shall be a field-marshal during this war. Since he is sure to be the same fool as before, the judge concluded, the children of his present victims, being opposed to him, will be able to bring the war to a close with fewer casualties to themselves.

The officer's victims approved; and so he was sentenced to be promoted to Field-Marshal of the army that was to attack his own country. But I am sure he would not have got off so lightly if he had been less of a fool.

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C8. Later, in the same pavilion, I sat at the accusation of a judge. It was quite a bit oddish to see a judge of Earth on trial before judges of Niames. This defendant's Timestrip showed that his personal character was in the main quite good. But he allowed himself to inject his personal feelings into his court decisions, and with a curious result. Thus, when his breakfast had

been well cooked, and he left home on pleasant terms with his spouse, he would come to court happy and good humored. In this mood he had freed people who were guilty of robbing the public treasury by intrigue and treachery, dismissed charges against members of his political faith who had been caught red handed squander ing the governmental funds, and recognized as mere friendly gifts large sums of money that had been paid by private individuals to public officials who rendered them valuable concessions at the public expense.

But Heaven forefend if his biscuits had been too crusty, if the yolks of his breakfast eggs had fallen apart in the frying, or if his wife had presented to him unpaid charges for her newest garments. On such days he would come into court raging like an angered tiger. His eyes would flash forth fiery sparks, and woe to the man who was haled before him on a charge of selling undergarments in the public market without a license, or drinking the King's health in a disrespectful manner, or neglecting to clear the snow from the front of his home within the prescribed time, or committing any one of the hundred thousand such heinous crimes that are listed in the solemn by-laws of the city. Woe to these lawbreakers, for they would not escape with less than heavy fines and long imprisonments. And if worse came forth from the righteous judge's lips, it was not at all surprising. None was there to protest, and no lawyers were assigned to defend

those charged with such offenses. "We shall suppress criminality under the severest punishments," the judge would thunder. And the guilty wretch trembled, for he knew not that by this the judge meant only "We shall not have broken yolks in my breakfast eggs!"

And if many poor men were ruined by the excessive fines, and if families were left to starve when their breadwinners were committed to prison for months, Whose fault was it if not that of the guilty people themselves? They should have thought of that before they turned criminals (before the crust hardened on the judge's biscuits); they should have foreseen the consequences to their dependents ere they violated the sacred laws of the land (ere the judge's wife decided she must have three new tea gowns). And right in the pavilion were several thousand victims of the judge's jealousy of the law's majesty, many of whom had had their punishments doubled because they attempted to plead for mercy. They had

been plain, helpless people, but now they were the judge's equal, and they had many weighty accounts to settle with him.

Much to my surprise the presiding judge induced all these people to drop their claims against the accused. He succeeded in doing this by acknowledging that the accused was unquestionably guilty as charged. He had set more store by his stomach's luxuries than by the vital wants of poor people, and he had held more important his wife's smile and frown than the laughter and weeping of multitudes. But the judge of Anidedarta explained to the accusers the nature of a second series of charges that were pending against the defendant. These charges were to deal not with the accused judge's convictions but with his acquittals. And even the acquitted people themselves—certain henchmen of the judge—

were to appear against him, instead of appearing as his friends, because his lenience with them had encouraged them to ever greater criminality.

When the victims of the judge's indigestion and family troubles heard of these charges they were so sorry for him that they let him off scot-free. I had no doubt that the former judge was due to find out that the better his breakfasts had been the worse it would turn out for him in Anidedarta. I did not wait to see the actual arraignment of the judge on the basis of his acquittals because Attarokib urged me to come into the next pavilion to see a very curious trial.

C9. It turned out to be not only curious but quite humorous also. A charge of "robbery and wastage" was made against the defendant. The latter did not seem to me to look like a robber type, and I did not at first understand what was meant by "wastage." I learned the facts only during the progress of the trial, for I had missed the showing of his Timestrip. The accused, it appeared, had been a writer and lecturer. During his career he had stolen many ideas from his contemporaries, besides more than a million hours of time from those who had read his books and attended his lectures. And since neither had had any true worth to anyone, he was charged, in addition, with wasting large quantities of paper and other materials connected with his writing and lecturing. Outside of these accusations he had been an almost model human, scrupulous in his personal conduct and in his dealings with his fellowmen.

After being cleared of the charges of stealing ideas from his contemporaries (it developed that they themselves had stolen these ideas from ancient writers who had long since been only too glad to relinquish all claims

upon them), he was informed of a large number of wondrous estates that had accumulated for him in Niames through the energies of the host of servants whom his white guard represented. But before he could take possession of them, and in order that he should learn the value of lost time, he was ordered inclayed as a snail who would not die until he had completely traversed the em tire circumference of the Earthglobe. The "robber" of time marched very, very slowly out of the court.

C10. Following this trial, I entered a pavilion reserved for suicides. The questions of the judge were the same in all the cases before him.

"Do you understand that you have violated your agreement to remain on Earth as long as you could—this being a condition of your privilege to go there?"

An affirmative nod was the reply.

"Do you understand that you must go back now to begin again at the beginning?"

Another affirmative nod.

"Do you understand that as a lesson and in justice to yourself you must be reinclayed under conditions that will indicate that your lot in the last inclayment was not so bad as to justify you in removing yourself from Earth before the proper time?"

Another affirmative nod.

"Then your trial for your last life-in-clay will wait and be held together with that for your next. In the meantime wait yonder until I find a suitable reinclayment for you."

I stayed long enough to see the disposal of three suicides. The first was a young man disappointed in love. His fiancee had jilted him in favor of a richer man. The second was a middle-aged man who had failed in

business and had not the courage to face the consequences. The third was a sick man who grew weary of seeking a cure from doctors and, with hope of

recovering lost, sought death as a relief.

The jilted young man was ordered to be reinclayed so that he would become the son-in-law of the woman for love of whom he had attempted to obliterate his personality. This would give him an excellent opportunity, the judge declared, to determine whether she was worth it. The other two were to change roles. The bankrupt was to be an invalid and the sick man was to fail in business, so that each would learn, and admit upon their return to Niames, that their previous inclayment had been much the happier.

C11. My attention was given next to the trial of a man who was charged in the Criminal Court with a practice which one would hardly expect to find considered so earnestly and by such a high tribunal. The accusation against this man was that he had made it a practice to humiliate people in public. In most other respects he had a balance in his favor, but this was over-weighted by the charge in the Criminal Court. Indeed, it was even demonstrated by his white escort that he had been courteous and kind to his friends and employees in his private relations with them. But the black guard showed conclusively that whenever he found himself with the same persons in the presence of others he took a cruel delight in humiliating and shaming them, causing them untold mental anguish.

Many who had thus suffered keenly by his caustic tongue were present in the pavilion, and they certainly had carried around with them for many years the memory of the defendant's heartless treatment. Reducing the

charge to its simplest terms, the presiding judge declared that in this man they had to deal with one who combined in himself the qualities of good-heartedness and cruelty to his fellow beings. Two opposed characteristics; and he had been unable to suppress either. He had both treated his friends well and humiliated them. What he should have done, the court thought, since both qualities demanded expression, was to treat his fellowmen kindly and humble himself. Under these circumstances the only thing to do was to grant him an opportunity to behave better. He was accordingly sentenced to be reinclayed for a few years as a mongrel dog. He would thus find ample opportunity to suffer humiliation himself whilst he was devoted to the welfare of others. As this sentence was approved by the flashing of the green light, and the sad humiliator was led out by his black guard, I

could not help hoping that the “dog” would not meet with such cruel treatment as he had accorded his friends.

I inquired of Attarokib on this point whether, since this person had been sentenced to lead a dog’s life as a punishment, it was not the duty of Earthmen to humiliate him so that his sin will be thoroughly expiated. My guide hastened to assure me that nothing could be more erroneous. No Earthman is commissioned to aid this dog, or any inclayed being, to expiate his sin. Indeed, those who will maltreat the dog will be taken to account for it in Anidedarta as for any other act unbefitting a human being.

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: But if all the Earthpeople knew this and carefully refrained from unkindness to any dumb creature would not this dog and others incarnated as animals escape their punishment? And would not the purposes of this court be defeated?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Not at all. In the first place the mere fact that he has to live a few years as a dog is already humiliation enough for the convict. Then again, the fact that humans, thinking him a dog, treat him with kindness will make it plain to him how heinous it was to humilate his fellow humans. Thus by kindness to him the Earthman can teach the inclayed in dog’s form a better lesson than by treating him brutally. Likewise with all such unfortunates. And so you see that the purposes of this court cannot be defeated, for the real end sought in punishing the ego of any stellarian for his wrongdoings as Earthman is to open up his eyes so that he will desire to better himself.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: I am glad you have clear ed this matter up for me. I did not suppose for a moment that the courts of Niames would look with favor upon the maltreatment of animals by human beings, but I did wonder how inclayment in the form of a lower animal could be any punishment except with the cooperation, in a brutal manner, of the Earthmen. You have enlightened me, and again I have to thank you. But before we leave this subject—I suppose the same principle applies to those reinclayed as humans?”

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Naturally. An ego may be ordered reinclayed with a view to having him undergo certain unpleasant but, for himself, valuable experiences. Earthmen, however, do not know and cannot ever know who such persons really are. And even if they did they would be wrong to inflict a punishment upon a fellowman which they were not directly ordered to do in Anidedarta. Those who must will find their fates without the helpful efforts of unknowing Earthmen."

C12. In one of the most dramatic trials that I attended the accused had belonged to the highest aristocracy of his country on Earth, as it developed when his Timestrip unfolded its story. He had been a titled nobleman, an active member of the ruling class, a statesman occupying a very high diplomatic position. It was shown that on several occasions he had held the peace of ten nations in his hand. Beside him stood a black guard so large that he was frightful to behold. And there was no white guard. Yet this diplomat was not charged with the instigation of war. On the contrary, he had most often thrown his influence on the side of pacific relations He had actually believed in his heart and soul that peace was preferable to war—this was proved beyond a doubt. But though an European himself, there was present in the vast pavilion a multitude, numbering in millions, most of which (though not by any means all) was from the oriental parts of the Earth. It was during the latter half of the running of the Timestrip that the reason for the presence of so many accusers, and the nature of their complaint, became clear.

He was shown to have been one of the most despicable criminals in the world, an active participant with a group of international human despoilers in one of the most dangerous conspiracies against the welfare of mankind, his share of the work having consisted chiefly of suppressing the truth about this criminal activity. As the full significance and far reaching efforts of his crime unfolded themselves I could see that the jurors were stricken with horror. They seemed to shrink from the task of judging a crime so vicious.

When the Timestrip had run quite a long way, when it was almost finished, I was shocked to perceive that the accused was no stranger to me. Years ago I

had met him personally at an embassy ball, though I struck up no friendship with him. Later I had heard and read of him often. And I had always held the man in highest esteem, regarding him as a splendid example to the diplomatists of all the world. Now I met him again—after his clay was dead on Earth—and he was facing trial in Anidedarta charged with having supported the poisoners of millions of humans, and with carefully suppressing all the truth of this villainous traffic in drugs!

As the details came out it appeared that he had been one of a group of international diplomats who conspired, in the interests of their countrymen who were opium growers, to hinder and defeat all attempts to reduce the quantity of these drugs grown and consumed. In the name of free commerce he had supported the right of his countrymen to grow as much of the poisonous opium leaves as they can sell. Moreover, in order to prevent the masses of his countrymen from learning the extent of the drug traffic and how many humans were being destroyed by it, he had defended the growers' right to keep hidden from public scrutiny the accounts of their production and disposal of the deadly drug. Neither the protests of his own more enlightened countrymen had moved him to take a more humane view of the problem, nor had the pleas of enlightened orientals fallen on heeding ears. He was the potent defender of the unlimitable commercial rights of his countrymen to produce and sell whatever they please and as much as they can find a market for.

He was now brought to book. Millions of orientals who had fallen victims of the poisons that the accused had protected were now present with a demand for justice. Thousands of occidentals including a host of his own countrymen and women, were present to settle

the same score with him. They cried out bitterly when his Timestrip showed how conferences called especially for the purpose of reducing the production of opium had been made ineffectual by his clever and brazen diplomatic maneuvering. He was revealed making plans to discredit those few agencies that were interested in the gradual abolition of the use of debilitating drugs. He was shown terrorizing into silence, by threats based on his power ful position, those who showed an inclination to acquaint the public with the facts of how the drug traffic was supported in high governmental circles at the instigation of the rich growers. For above all it was necessary to keep secret these facts. Their exposure would surely have

meant the ruin of this noble diplomat and all his aids in their various countries.

They had succeeded too well in keeping their labors secret. But there was no concealment in Niames. In Anidedarta the Timestrip revealed the full duplicity of every participant in the crime of supporting the continued growth of opium in certain places and its sale not only into the orient but even secretly into those occidental countries where its importation is prohibited. All the details of the story were revealed, and millions were there to testify to the harm they and their families had suffered as the result of taking the drug. These pitiable victims made a most horrible impression with the exhibition of their spiritual ruination.

Among those present to testify against the accused were several official persons. There were a few who declared themselves representatives of certain oriental nations, and they charged the defendant with having brought shame and discredit upon the names of their respective races. There was also a most beautiful and brilliantly garbed lady who introduced herself to the

court as the President of The Society For The Promotion of Truth On Earth, and she testified that never had Truth been so brutishly disgraced, so shamelessly distorted. as by the deliberate suppression of the facts connected with this crime of poisoning and crippling millions of humans out of sheer greed for gold and power.

There was no doubt in my mind, when I saw the arraignment of all this damning evidence, that the accused was likely to draw upon himself the severest of all Niamesian punishments. I should not have been at all surprised if judge and jury had straightway pronounced the awful verdict. I was surprised, rather, to see that judge and jury made an earnest effort to defend him, stressing his efforts to maintain peace among the nations. But his accusers were unforgiving, and, as the black guard wept, the sentence of death was pronounced, together with that of Dreampit.

I questioned Attarokib concerning the convict’s chances in the Supreme Court.

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: On the surface of it he should be condemned to extinction. But one never says that the Supreme Court of Niames will not find a way to be merciful. We must remember that his kin will comb the whole universe for every shred of evidence in his favor. And they will unquestionably find many to appear and plead for him, many who will consider above all his services in the interests of international peace. Against him will count the lives of millions whom he crippled and ruined and reduced to the most abject misery—even women of his own country who were crushed into lives of shame and indecency through the drugs that he protected and promoted. Do you think they or their kin will ever forgive him?”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: You believe then that he is doomed?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: No, I shall not say that. He has a reasonable chance to escape the worst. It is very fortunate for him that he sincerely opposed himself to warmaking—on this chiefly his chance rests to have his punishment reduced. His victims will probably be induced to consent that he be reinclayed again and again as one of their nation and in such circumstances that he shall bear the brunt of the suffering and none of the reward connected with liberating their own kin from the curse of the drug which ruined them. Someone must undo his devilish work. Probably he shall be given an opportunity to aid in the least pleasant phases of this process. But nothing is certain until he appears before the Supreme Court, and that is yet a year off.”

C13. We had held this intercommunication whilst leaving the pavilion where I witnessed this saddest of trials. At our next pause I found myself watching the arraignment of a man who had been a thoroughgoing hypocrite. All his life-in-clay he had pretended to be a religious and good hearted man but actually had been faithless and utterly indifferent to the troubles of his fellow men.

One of his special hypocrisies had been to pretend a great regard for the welfare of dumb beasts, and he had joined himself to a society for preventing cruelty to those creatures. His Timestrip showed how one winter morning he had haled a poor carter into the courts on a charge of fading to cover his mule with a warm blanket; and he had bullied the judge into

levying a fine against the offender. Now, the scene reproduced by the Timestrip showed that the carter himself was at the time without

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a proper overcoat, clad in tattered garments, and shivering with cold. In his home, it developed, they had to be very sparing of fuel, and often were cold and hungry. Yet the present defendant had demanded the taking of the poverty stricken carter's last coin as a fine, depriving his children of bread for the following day, besides preventing the poor man from earning his usual day's wages. Instead of counting in his favor, the peculiar way he took to show his love of mules—at the expense of an unfortunate fellow man and his suffering family—counted against the defendant in Anidedarta.

He was sentenced to make a complete tour of the Earth, in ego form, and kiss every mule, horse, cow, dog and cat that he would meet, on the lips. When he had learned that love of dumb beasts was by no means the finest thing in the universe—that at any rate it was only secondary to love of his fellow humans—then he could return to Niames and stand trial in the Civil and Criminal Courts for any charges that might be brought against him before those tribunals. His own black escort, who was to supervise this comical kissing game, accompanied the convicted hypocrite out of the pavilion.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Do you know, the sentence in this trial has made me think of a phrase—which I have never understood—that seems markedly appropriate to it."

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: A phrase appropriate to this trial? Quote it. I am interested."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: I am reminded of the verse 'They that sacrifice men kiss calves'—it's somewhere in the Scriptures, but I can't recall where."

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: No matter where, it is very telling, since this sacrificer of men will shortly be

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kissing both calves and their cousins—poor dumb beasts!"

C14. A young British sailor's trial was the next that Attarokib directed me to attend. This representative of my country's navy had quite a host of transgressions to account for, but in the end these were evenly balanced by his good deeds and his tragic violent death in early youth. The court then announced that if anyone would find a good deed, however subtle the quality of its goodness, which had not yet been credited to the defendant, it would be permitted to overbalance judgment in his favor: otherwise he would have to be reinclayed in order to find some good to balance the scale in his favor.

The former sailor himself declared immediately that there was one quality in him which he thought his white escort had not sufficiently developed—and that was his love of fair play. I looked in wonder at the white guard. On his features was an expression of regret and disappointment mingled, seeming to say "Now you have taken a false step that I shall not be able to get you out of." But the defendant was already showing on his Timestrip how often he made fair play a point of honor. Lastly he came to a scene of riot. It was in one of the British colonies where two religious factions were attacking one another. The defendant was ordered by his officer to shoot. He fired his musket into the crowd, felling one of the combatants. Then he reloaded, aimed carefully at a combatant on the other side (by now both factions were seen running from the bullets of the sailors) and felled him too.

"This" the defendant asserted confidently, "is also an example of my love of fair play. You see, I had shot,

under orders, one of the rioters. But as there were two sides to the fight I made sure to do the same for the other side—to shoot one of its people. Now I think my love of fair play should be credited to me for all its worth"

I understood now the reason why the white escort had neglected to make the most of the defendant's love of fair play. I was not surprised to hear the judge ask the former sailor with much sarcasm in his tone whether he was sure it was only his sense of justice which had motivated him in committing a cold blooded, inexcusable murder. And I thought that he got off quite easily with the sentence to be reinclayed for as many years as the second man he killed in that riot had lived, at the end of which time he was to die through the medium of a fool like himself. It was indicated that there was not another fool like him who, at the proper time, would be a fit agent

for the convict's death. The court therefore ruled that he should die through an agent nearly as much of a donkey as himself; and this, it was found, would necessitate that he should die of a kick from the hind legs of an ass.

C15. Later I saw a Chinese Earthman on trial, and one of the charges against him was that he had ruined a hundred pounds of garments by using a cheap chemical in his laundry that saved him a few pence. In connection with other crimes of a more serious nature the Chinese was ordered reinclayed and to die when he would drink a solution of this chemical in a glass of water, mistaking it for nutritious rice water.

C16. There was a trial of one who had been on Earth a Negro slave on a white man's plantation. Among other things he was charged with having stolen many

watermelons out of his master's patch. The court ordered him to pay the full computed value of all the water melons he had stolen from his master —the latter being still on Earth—by despatching four and a half dollars worth of Anozam to him. He was also advised to watch for his master's arrival in Niames, which was due in no very long time, and then to institute suit against him for a heavy balance due the slave on forty-two years of valuable labor, besides certain other claims.

C17. One of the trials that ended with a sentence I thought rather amusing was that of one who had spoken ill of members of a religion not his own and made charges against them calculated to instigate an attack upon them by his co-religionists. The white guard made sure to prove that his attempts had been futile. His stories had been largely discounted, and no action had eventuated as a result. He was ordered to return to Earth in ego form and catch all the words and phrases he had uttered against his fellowmen of the religion he hated, as well as those of his words which others had repeated after him. If he would bring them all to the court he would be forgiven by the people he had slandered, but if any were left he would be held strictly accountable for the trouble that their reiteration might create. He was given half a century for the completion of this remarkable task. I saw him leave the pavilion carrying a curious sort of net upon his shoulder.

C18. The last trial that I attended in Anidedarta, when it was nearing morning and almost time for the courts cf Niames to close, turned out to be probably the oddest of them all. I saw the accused standing alone in one of the pavilions—a most unusual thing. Attarokib

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nodded, indicating that here I should find something worth witnessing. I entered and soon acquainted myself with the facts.

The accused, born a Mohammedan, had been converted to Christianity, and had thereafter occupied his time in missionary work among his people. It was shown that the motive underlying his choice of this career had been simply a desire to earn a very comfortable and easy livelihood—previously he had been a starving laborer. In this he had practiced a long continued deception upon his blind converters who thought him a soul they had saved. For he had not believed a single word that he or his instructors preached.

Now the distracting thing about him was that in all other matters he had been an excellent, well behaved, person. For the money he received from his churchly converters he had rendered them dutiful services, preaching both day and evening to young and old Moslems, to men and women, on the great advantages, both economical and spiritual, of accepting Christianity.

True, he had not succeeded in winning a single convert. But this was due to no lack of effort on his part. It was due rather to a lack of talent for preaching, his abilities being more in the line of weaving and repairing worn rugs. Since thus he had committed no crime to speak of, he should have been admitted to some part of Niames. But it was at this point that the problem concerning him arose. To no place could he be assigned where he would not be obnoxious to his neighbors. Among his former fellow-Mohammedans he could find no welcome because he had been a traitor to their faith. He would be even less welcome, if possible, among his Christian associates, for they knew him now in his true colors.

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This was why no one had appeared as an interested person at his trial. His creditors wished not to collect anything from him. His kin he had himself rejected. And his adopted friends knew now that he had sought only their money. They wanted neither his preaching nor his rug repairing

now. He stood there, a lonesome, forlorn, hapless figure. I pictured him as a son of Ishmael with a twisted cross upon his chest which he could neither remove nor straighten properly. No one came to advise him or console him in his trouble, and even the court was at a loss what to do with him. Out of sympathy for the judges in their dilemma I really wished the accused had been more of a vilain so that they could send him on to some specific punishment.

Looking about me I saw all the pavilions emptying. It was time for closing the evening's sessions. Only in this one court the judge and jury still sat—not a little embarrassed, for they knew not how to dispose of the fellow. And in Anidedarta it is a tradition that each defendant is entitled to know his fate on the night of trial. It was getting late. The presiding judge glanced out toward the stars to learn the hour. Evidently he saw that it was time to terminate the session, although the jury were yet agitatedly discussing the possibilities of the case—or, more likely, the impossibilities. Suddenly the judge, who had been communicating with different departments of Niames, addressed the court.

"It is universally agreed," he declared, "that only one disposition of such a person is possible—he must go back to Earth and join himself with somebody, win someone's respect so that he will be acceptable in the midst of some group. It is for his own good to be reinclayed. I have sought a proper place and condition for his reinclayment and only one seems to be suitable,

as I have been informed from the Palace of Birth Control in Mikahes. There is a couple on Earth, living in a great metropolis upon the continent of Europe, who are recorded as having contracted a mixed marriage, the man being Moslem and the woman Christian. Now. a daughter has been allotted to their marriage and the woman has just conceived, though she does not yet know it. But they are already fighting constantly as to the religion in which their future child will be brought up. He says it must and shall be Moslem. She says it must and shall be Christian. My suggestion is that our friend here be sent on instantly to Mikahes to be assigned to that couple, for within the next twenty-four hours their baby must have life. Of course he will have to go through life this time as a female, but we have no remedy for that now. At any rate, under the loving care of this quarreling couple, he shall certainly have an opportunity to make a free choice of his religion. If

the jury are in agreement I shall order the defendant inclayed at once as the daughter of this pair."

There was a unanimous chorus of assent. The judge had scarcely uttered the sentence when suddenly they vanished, jury and president, the whole court, including the defendant. As the last moment of the time allotted for their stay in Anidedarta expired, automatically functioning currents bore them off each to his proper place. The whole region was by now empty, for multitudes had been streaming away through the air during the last few minutes, and suddenly the pavilions darkened; but not before there was a flash of green in the cupola under which the last sentence had just been pronounced. That night Attarokib and I were the very last to leave Anidedarta.

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"Sepsafem to Attarokib: This has been a most wonderful evening, if a very busy one. I cannot admire the courts of Anidedarta enough, both for the manner of their conduct and the character of the justice they dispense. And now whither shall we go next? What new and astonishing marvels has this land of Niames yet in store for me?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: I might take you now to the great Temple of Religions, from which you could see certain parts of Aiahatnig. Your friends from Nimikahara are spending their entire visit in that Temple. But I think it better for us to go now back to that part of Mikahes which we did not visit when we made the tour of its Industrial Center."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Just as you say, dear friend. You lead where it is unquestionably best for me to be. I am only too glad to follow you. At any rate, I can rejoin my friends when I have seen all else and remain with them until the termination of this wondrous visit."

My guide was silent at these words—a silence that I did not understand until much later, for evidently he wished not to worry me in advance by things that would happen in the future. Instead of answering he gripped his girdle: I followed suit, and we were soon soaring away from Anidedarta towards what was to be the final and most interesting stage of my adventure.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN
A CORNER OF GRIEF AND RELIEF

The parades of the convicts—A few acquaintances—The mock marriages—The sport of the imps—Arrival of the relief—The Orders of Emancipation—On to Mikahes.

C1. By this time I had already grown familiar enough with the outline of Niames to notice as we flew from Anidedarta that Attarokib was not leading me directly along the route we should traverse in going to Mikahes. I asked him whether I was not mistaken in tin's impression.

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: You are right. I have chosen a different rout for our return to Mikahes in order that you may see a sight which should interest you not a little. We are going to pass over the island of Hatefat on the way. But instead of alighting we will merely hover above and look on for a brief period. We must not spend much time there—we haven't any to lose."

After this warning I kept a sharp lookout for a new region. We were not long in coming to it. I recognized the signs of a new part of Niames as soon as we soared in sight of Hatefat A short distance before us,

and not much beneath, was situated an island small in extent as Niamesian proportions go. The light in it was plain white and rather intense—something like the light of Aimedrat. Its bottom, however, unlike the black Aimedratian bottom, was a very light, transparent grey, so that beneath it we could see plainly the ether ocean, and farther below the comparatively opacious nitroxic ocean.

We let ourselves down slowly to a short distance above the surface. From this point of vantage I viewed first of all several parades, some quite large and others small. I soon understood the nature of these processions, for I recognized many of the egoes. They were groups of persons who had been sentenced to one or another punishment during the previous evening in the courts of Anidedarta. The convicts were all accompanied by their black guards, and followed closely by many of their relatives and friends.

Among those whom I recognized were most of the persons whose trials I have described. The miser who had met with so much sorrow on the Foolstool was there; and the highwayman who had taken pleasure in

frightening people—he was surrounded by quite a host of imps who seemed determined to have at least one frog out of him. The millionaire who had been sentenced to be a tramp for seven lives on Earth was present, as well as the religious fanatic who had been sentenced to Dreampit for a year. The latter, fast asleep like a corpse, reclined upon the shoulders of a number of wicked looking pallbearers.

Another who enjoyed the doubtful honor of being carried aloft by the creatures he had generated was the debaucher who had been ordered caged. The brutal Mohammedan, punished in n somewhat similar fashion,

was not far away, still struggling in the embraces of his seven nauseating houris. The Jew who was to be reinclayed in Russia, the liar with a pink monkey upon his shoulder, the super-heroic officer, the honorable judge, the author-lecturer who had never written or said anything of true value, the cruel humiliator, the diplomat with his weeping black guard, the pious hypocrite, the fair minded sailor, the economical Chinese, the would be instigator of race riots with his queer insect net, the convert who had been ordered to be what I judged would resemble a Hermaphrodite more than anything else—and even the politician destined to be a stingless mosquito—all were there, and many others whom I recognized, and some thousands strange to me.

Among those I remembered from Anidedarta who were missing in these processions were my own Captain Hatchet-head, the Negro slave, the poor laborer, and the three suicides. Where were they? Attarokib explained that the Captain did not belong here, for since his reinclayment was not a punishment but a privilege which he had chosen of his own free will, he had gone directly to the Palace of Birth Control. The Negro, as well as the poor laborer, had been ordered directly to different parts of Niames. The suicides did not belong here because, having come back to Niames before their proper time, their reinclayment was inevitable, and they had no hope of a retrial dr a pardon; hence they too had gone directly to the Palace of Birth Control. And why were the others here? Attarokib declared that most of them hoped for a pardon, or a retrial, or a lessening of the sentence, hence they were permitted to wait here until their white guards and their friends and kinsmen could take the proper steps. There is no other place where the creatures born out of their wrongdoings, in whose charge

they must remain, can stay until it is determined finally whether the convict is to go to the Palace of Birth Control to be reinclayed.

Without exception the convicts marching in the processions were being subjected to extreme indignities at the hands of their black guards. They were mocked and made fun of and roughly handled. Though many of them looked strong enough to retaliate, they bore it all with sorrowful humiliation, apparently because they felt that they themselves had given life to these tormentors. I am sure, however, that they suffered most for having to undergo such treatment in sight of their kin and best friends.

There could be no doubt about it that the black imps were enjoying themselves tremendously. As if by prearrangement all of them joined in conducting mock marriages of the caged debaucher and the Mohammedan, those unlucky convicts knowing not how to resist their playful guards. And how thorough the tormentors were! In the mock marriages they did not leave out any detail. They furnished music of a dreadful quality, and inimitable dances so ludicrous that many of the convicts could not help laughing. They decked the grooms in garlands of flowers that consisted of rubbish, and besprinkled them liberally with what they were pleased to call Chinese rice, but alas! the rice looked as if it had gone through the process of being consumed by Earthmen. They took delight in rough games like tumbling their charges about in a very careless and undignified manner. Several of the big ones took up positions at various distances and they threw one of the convicts around among themselves like a ball while a smaller one tried to intercept the convict in passage. I must confess that the imps showed great skill in this sport.

Another of their sports, but this was a very cruel one, consisted of casting some convict into a trance and leaving him thus afloat in the atmosphere. In this condition he would imagine himself back at whatever occupation he had followed on Earth. And whatever he attempted to do he would fail in. He would meet ah ways with some catastrophe. If he were a merchant he would suffer a fatal loss. If he were a laborer his workmanship would fall apart. If he were a scientist his calculations would prove erroneous at a vital point. If he were a military man he would suffer an ignominious defeat. As he imagined these events, the convict described them in his trance, together with his disappointment. Then the imps

awakened him and repeated his terrorized phrases, and made sport of him, to his deep humiliation.

C2. But the black tormentors did not have it all their own way. Every now and then an army of little white creatures, headed by some convict's white escort, made its appearance. A battle then ensued between them and the black imps who had charge of that convict, which raged until the tormentors were all beaten to death. The fortunate convicts, thus released, eagerly soared away, accompanied by their liberators. I consulted my guide on the meaning of these rescues.

He told me that often a sentence is issued in the courts not because it will be carried out, though the accused deserves no less, but for the purpose of frightening him, or giving him a brief punishment which consists of his supposing it will last long. During the few hours that it takes his rescuers to prepare for their pleasant duty the convict has an opportunity, by learning the character of his Hack imps, to realize the true

nature of the troubles his wrongdoing has brought into being. By the time he begins to understand this thoroughly the forces created by his good deeds are permitted to rescue him from further suffering. Sometimes this Occurs within a few minutes after the convict arrives in Hatefat. And Attarokib added that this island was the only battle ground for the two forces of good and evil except Earth; that here those battles which they did not finish on Earth are sometimes fought out to a conclusion.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: And have the forces of good a decent chance on this Island of Hatefat?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: You will be surprised to learn that they always win. Only in the cases of men who have left very few good deeds among their evildoing his white guards do not try."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Now what happens to those who are freed?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Mostly they go on to Aiatavsa, and later they rejoin their kin in that part of Mikahes to which we are going, where they live for some time. It depends on their past."

There was still another means by which many convicts were freed. In a number of instances I saw the relatives of the convicts rescuing them from their tormentors by appearing armed with an Order of Emancipation, which they had obtained from some department in Anidedarta and which the black

imps respected so much that they surrendered, reluctantly enough, the person whom they were tormenting. Most of these Orders, I was informed, meant that the convicts for whom they were issued would have a new trial. I could see, however, that both types of rescues took place only with the lesser offenders. None of the caged prisoners

was liberated, or those who had been sentenced for the grosser crimes. The beneficiaries of the numerous rescues were those who had been sentenced for personal transgressions and such offences against their fellow beings as the latter had been induced to forgive since the trial.

Only one class of prisoners are not freed from the indignities and painful experiences of Hatefat Island within a few months at the utmost, Attarokib told me—those sentenced to be extinguished. If the Supreme Court confirms the pronouncement against them—which means that in all the universe there is no proof that any shred of good survives in them—the sentence is carried out; and they are taken away to the world of void called Dreampit until all the evil they created is annihilated—a process in which their own egoes are painfully and finally destroyed.

Much to my interest, among those who were liberated in my presence either by their own good deeds or by Orders of Emancipation obtained through their relatives, were included the miser, the Chinese, the Jew, and the liar with the monkey upon his shoulder. This oddly assorted band was not altogether freed, but they were rescued from the hands of their tormentors after having been in Hatefat only a short while and sent on immediately to their various destinations. Incidentally I observed that someone presented to the Jew an extra order, upon which I focused my sight. I saw that it was a revocation of the special verdict that he should not be permitted to emigrate from Russia, where he was to be born, to America or England. I was much amused to see his jubilance upon discovering that at a later day in his coming Earthlife he would be able to migrate to one of the lands more preferred than that of his nativity. He

waxed so joyous that he executed a very athletic Russian dance, done on one foot with the left hand raised up in the air and the right hand bent at the elbow in a half circle, the fingers resting upon his loin.

There were many other scenes of happiness upon Hatefat as armies of white and groups of relatives arrived and freed many of the convicts; especially was there joyous exuberance among those who were liberated completely. But we did not pause to watch them. Attarokib suddenly turned at a sharp angle and I followed him at a goodly speed toward that part of Mikahes which he called Kuramala. I was very anxious by all means to see this region before I left Niames; which event, I began to suspect from the demeanor of my guide and from hints he had let drop, was not far off.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN
THE STRANDED MIGRANTS

The reunion of the migrants—Men with fifty fathers, ladies who are their own granddaughters, and other mixed relations—The ancients in our midst—How we were welcomed in the first Kuramalan land—The National Club—A visit to the President—The stars of gold—How I participated in a concert—The arguments in the Hall of Decisions—My investigation on the Isle of the Zenomaniacs.

C1. Arrived at the gate of Mikahes, we entered the passage leading to the Industrial Center, where scenes familiar to me were in evidence. Not pausing for more than a glance at the fascinating occupations, we turned to the right and paused directly through one of the main entrances of Kuramala.

My first impression was that I had entered a spacious and beautiful port of immigration. Hundreds of officials representing many nations were there, besides thousands of new arrivals whom they were interviewing. By listening to the conversation between the officials and the newcomers, which was freely communicated, I learned that the latter were the people who had lived one or more lives on Earth and had, since the conclusion of their most recent inclayment, been discharged by all

the Niamesian departments. They had gone through Anidedarta, had been mostly sent on thence to Aiatavsa, and were come now to settle in Kuramala with their kinsmen—many of whom had been living in this land hundreds and even thousands of years.

Right then I resolved that I would not submit to being mystified, and I asked Attarokib to inform me a bit about Kuramala. In reply to my questions he told me that this land was the place where live all stellarians who, having been inclayed, have only partially succeeded in their quest.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Just what does partial success mean as against complete success?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Complete success means learning to love all the beings of the universe, overcoming any antipathy towards those unlike oneself on account of differences in elemental constitution. You have seen the people in the Hall of Fame. They are completely successful, they have

achieved, and are immediately accorded, the freedom of the universe. Partial success means that a person has learned to love some of the beings unlike himself, but not all. If a stellarian has achieved friendship with one or ten nations, but not with all others, this is partial success."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: How long do the partially successful stay in Kuramala?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Until the end of the present Earth-period. Then they return to their native stars, and are free to visit the stars of the peoples whose friendship they earned."

Attarokib told me also that Kuramala is divided up into many lands, that each star-people has its own Kuramalan land, in outline like the country it inhabited on Earth. Some of these lands, however, are in several

copies, due to the fact that the territories of Earth which they represent have been occupied successively by peoples of different stars—as when the modern Greek people replaced the vanished old Greeks. There are thus two lands representing Greece in Kuramala, one occupied by the Greeks of antiquity and the other by the contemporary Greeks—for these people are from different stars! There are also duplications of Egypt, Italy, America, and many other lands of Earth.

While I was listening to Attarokib I had been looking around. I grew interested in the curious formalities that the arrivals in Kuramala went through. Anticipating my desire, Attarokib obtained permission for us to pass into one of the buildings of the port. It was a vast salon, many miles around, divided into several score alcoves, in each of which sat an official. Tens of thousands of people, old inhabitants, officials, and newcomers, were going hither and thither about their business. It all seemed too confusing to understand, but my guide helped me.

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: This is the Salon of Reunion. Each newcomer must establish here his origin and present connections in order to determine formally in which land he shall live. There is one alcove for each people. Now give your attention to the free intercommunication. It will interest you."

Obediently I listened to the establishment of origins and connections, and many curious and amazing facts came to light. First of all I learned that each arrival is met in the Salon of Reunion by those of his parents who are living in Kuramala—and many newcomers were thus greeted and claimed by ten or more fathers and mothers! This was due to no error but because these newcomers, in

various inclayments, had had different sets of parents—sometimes from different stars!

A most curious thought occurred to me upon learning this, which I hastened to mention to my guide.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: From what I see here it would seem that a person on Earth might meet a perfect stranger—perhaps someone from a foreign land—who was his father in a previous inclayment!"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: And why should you be surprised? Not only is this possible, but much more. The stranger a person meets on Earth might have been his grandmother or his sister or some other consanguineous relative, or may be his future child or parent."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: This passes wonder! For it seems to me that in repeated inclayments one might become the father of his own dead father—and be thus his own grandfather, and consequently his own grandson!"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Quite right. And there is almost no end to the number of interrelationships possible. Any lady on Earth may be her own sister and her own granddaughter, and her own mother-in-law into the bargain. Or, in consecutive inclayments, two women may change their roles—one being first the other's mother-in-law and later her daughter-in-law—"

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: It is growing quite complicated, and I am satisfied with these possibilities alone. And now tell me, are all these interrelationships brought out here?"

But this was a superflous question. I saw how each arrival learned not only who were his fathers and mothers in various inclayments but also who were his children and other consanguineous relatives. Those having a multitude of parents were few, however. Most of them

had no more than two or three fathers and mothers—few had more than five.

Seeing all this, I began to wonder what significance there could be in any ego's pedigree, since he was likely to have any number of parents from nearly as many different nations. Moreover I began now to puzzle over another question which, though quite important, had not occurred to me till then. What relationship could there be between Earthparents and their Earthchildren after their clay frames are dust? For the real persons, the egoes, are not generated by the Earthpeople, who reproduce out of themselves only the clay bodies to which the egoes of their children are attached. I was indeed greatly confused by this thought, for obviously, no relationship need necessarily exist between Earthparents and their children —they might derive from different stars! I had to watch the proceedings in the Salon of Reunion a long time, and turn often to Attarokib for an explanation, before I learned the truth of this mystery of our Earthlives; but I render it here in a concise form.

When, in any of his inclayments following the first, a stellarian, consisting of ego an soul, is born to parents of a nation not of his own star —which occurs under exceptional circumstances—the blood of the clay frame that he receives from his parents is united with his ego. By means of this connection the child's blood, which is inherited from his parents and was influenced by their egoes, affects the character of his own ego. It is thus the blood which, being welded to the ego, is the connecting link between the natures of parents and their children.

Not all egoes, however, are influenced in the same degree by the blood to which they are attached. And during several inclayments an ego may be welded to

many types of blood, some influencing his personality more and others less. Sometimes an ego is attached to a score of types of blood that have been influenced by the egoes of stellarians from twenty different stars during repeated inclayments, yet at the end of it all his personality has undergone no basic change. His ego retains all the major characteristics peculiar to his native star. And sometimes an ego during only his second inclayment is so strongly influenced by the blood of parents descended from a different star than his own that his nature alters completely and assumes the peculiar characteristics of the parents' star.

This was the fact that the pedigree-finding officials were trying to discover. And when, after each ego arriving at Kuramala had rendered the history of his Earthbirths in reverse order, beginning with the last and ending with the first, if it was shown that his parents were not all of one star, it became necessary to establish to what extent the blood of his foreign parents had influenced him. There is no dishonor connected with this, some of the stellarians from certain stars being quite susceptible to such influence. It is only a question of determining to which community of stellarians he shall be assigned in Kuramala.

To establish this important fact, the last Earthly father of the newcomer (or if he is not in Kuramala a kinsman in his place) takes him to the Character Determining Expert sitting in the alcove of his own people.

This Expert is able to tell after an examination lasting but a few moments whether the ego has the peculiar characteristics of his last father's star. If his decision is affirmative the newcomer accompanies this father to his Kuramalan land. But if the Character Determining Expert declares that the newcomer has not the characteristics

of his last father's star, his last mother, if she was not of the same star as his father, refers him to the Expert of her people.

This procedure is continued, going backward down the line of the newcomer's Earthparents throughout his inclayments, until he is identified as having the character istics of the star of one of his parents. Quite often he is examined fifty times, or twice as many times as he was inclayed, until his first Earthparents, who are always of his own star, claim him. This means of course that he has retained the basic characteristics of his own star—the commonest finding.

I followed the identification of egoes who had been (several times inclayed as French or Englishmen, but it was found by the Character Determining Experts that they were really ancient Greeks or Romans; and their Greek or Roman ancestors were present to welcome them back into their native communities. Again and again I was astounded to hear people begin reciting their pedigree as Englishmen and conclude by claiming identity as ancient Babylonians: or they began as Frenchmen and ended as Romans; or began as Americans (Indians) and concluded as Indians (Hindus). I discovered that a large number of persons living in the midst of the modern European nations were actually members of various ancient

peoples who had perished as such from Earth. Quite a few arrivals belonged to the Phoenicians, Amonites, Moabites, Amalekites, and other long vanished Biblical peoples, as well as to peoples of antiquity whose names were unfamiliar to me.

There were also a number of persons who for various reasons had been reinclayed in the midst of a foreign people while their own star had its unified representation on Earth. I recall such instances as a Russian who

had been recently inclayed as a Japanese, an African who had been lately an Arab, an Irishman who had been recently a Spaniard, and ever so many similarly fantastic interchanges. I became suddenly very curious to know definitely my own pedigree and the true star of my origin, though I believed my real personality to be indentified with the character of the English people. There was no way, however, to find this out at the time; for I had learned that questions concerning my own person were politely evaded by my guide.

C2. At last I was satisfied with what I had seen of the identification of the newly arrived Kuramalans, and suggested to Attarokib my readiness to proceed inland. It was necessary for us to obtain special permission for this, which Attarokib did immediately. We passed out of the Salon of Reunion in company with a group escorting several newcomers. Kuramala proper was in sight at last.

What a grand panorama unfolded itself before me as I focused my sight upon the great distances of the vast country! All the lands of Earth, in their true boundaries, were spread out before me, each country ten or twenty times as large as the Earth-territory it represents. There are no oceans; but between each land is an empty, uninhabited space, so that the borders of the various lands do not, as on Earth, join together.

Extending my sight I saw the whole land of Kuramala filled with the homes and public buildings of its inhabitants. Palaces of indescribable beauty rear highand wide their exquisitely carved towers and oddly designed wings. There are also a multitude of smaller and plainer homes, but all charming and beautiful. The whole land is laid out in an endless series of pretty

gardens and fine parks, filled with gorgeously glistening flowers and majestic trees and sparkling streams and odoriferous rivers, the sight and smell of them enough to intoxicate the senses of any beholder.

Following the group with whom we had left the Salon of Reunion, we were not long in coming to the borders of their land, which, Attarokib told me, represents Siberia.

At the boundary lines of their country the newcomers entered a tall building designed somewhat like a chessic castle, several archways being open at the bottom to admit the arrivals. Without hesitation we also entered, for this was a public building. Inside I discovered its purpose.

The newcomers were put through a process similar to the one I had undergone in Nimikahara: they entered a pool of strong light and came forth in a new garb. Previously the newcomers had had simply a bright grey appearance. When they came forth from immersion in this flood of light they had altered to a shining, silvery brightness so intense as to be almost azure. They were now of the same appearance as those who had come to meet them in the Salon of Reunion. But upon close examination I discovered that, among both newcomers and old inhabitants, some were intrinsically more brilliant than others—an indication of social and economic status, as among the Aimedratians.

The group we were following left the castle of immersion not by the side on which they had entered but on the other side, leading directly into the land. There they were met by a large committee who welcomed them with very odd music which they played on instruments no less interesting. Until then no one had taken any special notice of Attarokib and myself. But as we

emerged from the castle a part of the welcoming committee separated from the rest and played a most amazing song the sense of which—I felt it, since there were no words-was “Welcome Attarokib and his guest Sepsafem”!

This rather original musical greeting concluded, no one further bothered us. My guide who was all smiles at the impression that this simple and delightful ceremony had made upon me, only urged me to follow the group of newcomers. A minute later we arrived at what Attarokib called the National Club. It was an immense and breathtakingly beautiful palace, surrounded by many smaller structures in a park of vast dimensions.

We began a tour of the various sections of the club; and at this time we lost the group we had accompanied here. It would take volumes to describe all that I saw in half an hour, or to recount the interesting conversations I had with many of the people of the land. I passed rapidly through music chambers, lecture halls, museums, picture galleries, astronomical observatories, aquaria, zoological and botanical gardens, all perfect in a degree overshadowing the grandest Earthly conception. But aside from these things, which are known on Earth, there were many undreamed of on our planet—some of which I shall describe later.

Most interesting about all these departments of the club was the fact that they were organized with a view to satisfy the interest of the people in the life of the various stars. Nothing so fascinates the people of Kuramala as to be shown something about one of the stars of the universe. This seems to be a universal, deeply implanted characteristic of all humans; so that even on Earth, when we are completely ignorant of our stellarian origin and hardly dare to suspect that many stars are

inhabited by wondrous peoples and filled with endless marvels, the curiosity to know what is upon the planets, and even the ambition to visit them, crops up continually in our hearts.

In one of the museums that we passed through was exhibited a series of paintings by a group of native artists showing their own history. Beginning with a scene upon their native planet, the paintings depicted how they left it; how they went to Niames as beings without individual personality and were assigned to be inclayed in Siberia; how they lived on Earth and died; how they were many times reinclayed; how they were each after his inclayment assigned to Aiatavsa; and finally how thence they came to Kuramala. There were more than one hundred large paintings in the series, executed upon some fine white materials in all the colors of the universe and in these paintings were pictured all the hopes and strivings and trials and failures and victories of the stellarians. Some of the canvases showed how activity in establishing justice, freedom, and fraternity among the inclayed Earthmen was the highest achievement of the stellarians; and how those who followed this ideal on Earth became the superior beings of the universe. Other canvases showed various degrees of stellarian failure on Earth, and various degrees of partial success.

C3. Before we left the National Club Attarokib suggested that we owed to pay a visit to the President of the club to thank his people, through him, for the hearty welcome they had accorded us. We found this Siberian noble seated in a beautiful chamber of reception, and as we entered I recognized a few of the group of

new Kuramalans with whom we had come into the country. The president was talking to them, and freely.

"Do you hear me, my friends," he was saying, "and abandon this desire to be reinclayed now. I understand your feelings perfectly. You are by no means the first who have come to me under the same impulse with this desire. But I tell you it is not good for you to be inclayed again now. You would have a long and tiresome wait in the Palace of Birth Control, for many from our star are waiting for an opportunity to be inclayed the first time, and theirs is the right of precedence over you. You believe your life here will be intolerable, but indeed you will grow to like it. You all have won the right to visit one or two or three stars. And while we are waiting for the conclusion of the present period you may visit the people of those stars in their Kuramalan lands. You all have a month of vacation to acquaint yourselves with your new life here; then you have a month of time to spend in each land that you may visit before you are assigned to some work in Mikahes. In the meantime your daily Anozam is supplied to you from the national treasury. Go, my friends, and accept this temporary life until we may all return to our native star; and then, when the next period begins, we shall all have another opportunity to be inclayed."

What the discontented newcomers replied I could not receive for they addressed themselves directly to the President, but they left shortly, apparently reconciled to stay in Kuramala. The President immediately turned to us and engaged us in a friendly conversation. I found him to be a man of brilliant mentality and in every respect an ideal person. He questioned me as to how I was enjoying my visit, and being assured on that point expressed the hope that we would stay on for some time,

offering us the hospitality of his own home. Attarokib, however, explained that we would have to leave in a short time.

During our discussion I expressed surprise that the newcomers who had just left us were anxious to return to Earth in preference to living in beautiful and gay Kuramala. The President revealed the causes of this discontent to me.

"You see that we are not all on the same social plane, the difference being due to the degree of our achievement in inclayment. And though even the least successful of us has a beautiful home and freedom to enjoy countless wondrous things; and though the highest noble among us would never do a thing to make his fellowman feel inferior; and though every one of us is glad to see his fellows in the highest possible status; nonetheless, we all desire to attain the highest possible degree of achievement ourselves. We regret particularly that the number of peoples we may visit is limited. This is what makes the newcomers desire to try again to improve their personality through inclayment. There is not one of us who does not feel in some degree that his status ought to be better. There is not one of us who does not plan to try again at least during the next period. We can never feel wholly contented until we attain the freedom of all the universe, until we feel ourselves as one with all the beings that dwell in it."

It was evident that the President himself, who was the highest noble in his land, felt this discontent of which he spoke. I rather wondered at this at the time, but later, when I reviewed in my mind what living in Kuramala means to the stellarians, I understood it better. The Kuramalans have yet to fulfill their ambition to become masters of the universe; they can visit only a limited

number of peoples in Kuramala and on the stars—and when I had seen what individual wonders existed in each land I knew how disappointed they must feel who cannot see them all; they have no admission to the park of Aiahatnig—a very precious privilege to them, though I could not understand it; they are not pictured in the Hall of Fame—which means that they have not won the right to have a planet of their own. These considerations make them often to wish again to undertake the quest of achievement in the clay.

As we were about to leave, the President said to Attarokib—

"I hope you will take our guest to a concert which all our nation have been looking forward to for some time. It is in the national chamber of music, and is given by one of the great artists of a distant land. You do not

know, perhaps," he said to me, "that a concert by a foreign artist is a rare thing among us—we usually go to the land whose art we wish to enjoy. I urge you to hear this concert; it will doubtless be wonderful. I would accompany you myself, but unfortunately I cannot attend it."

Attarokib immediately promised to go with me to this concert and we took leave of the hospitable President. As we flew through the wide spaces of the beautiful land I saw many charming scenes. One in particular interested me, and I called my guide's attention to it.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: See yonder—in the river flowing around that tall palace are a man and a woman swimming! They do it beautifully, and seem to be enjoying themselves tremendously. What interests me particularly about them is the number of golden stars that they have upon their breasts. And I have seen different numbers of such stars on the breasts of many men and

women here who are going about in no more clothing than we have—our flighter girdles. Are the stars meant to take the place of clothing as ornaments?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: I see you understand that the people wear clothing here only to gratify their sense of ornament—and you will have to admit that their costumes are not only more wonderful than any you have seen on Earth but that each person wears garments suited to his or her own personality. But you have not surmised correctly about the stars. Though they are certainly ornamental, this it not their purpose."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Why aren't you telling me more about them?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Because there is the national chamber of music. When we find a place inside I shall tell you."

C4. The national chamber of music had indeed been in sight for some time. One could not miss it, in view of its huge size and odd shape—that of an inverted pyramid. This was only one of many fantastic architectural marvels in Kuramala. For while on Earth the law of gravity limits our architects to rectangular and cylindric dimensions that stand on a sufficient ground base, in Kuramala, there being no such law, structures like a pyramid standing with the tip on the ground are less to be wondered at than the firmly based pyramids on Earth.

The entrance to the national music chamber was through the top. I found the inside arranged as a series of narrow balconies one over the other; chairs and couches of all sorts, standing about in no formal order, were the furnishings of the balconies. Attarokib and I selected two chairs in what was perhaps the thousandth balcony

from the bottom, where we made ourselves comfortable. There was a stream of persons coming in all the time. I judged that there were two or three million already present when we arrived. At the bottom of the inverted pyramid was the performer's pit, a wide round space filled with more than one hundred different instruments, of which I recognized only a dozen.

On an exquisitely carved couch next to me reclined one of the people of the land, engaged in conversation with his neighbor on the next couch. Neither of them wore any clothing, though both had flighters like mine upon their loins. One of them had eight golden stars upon his breast, the other had six. In each star of the first man was a different symbol inscribed in blue; the other had six symbols similar to six of those in his companion's stars. There were hundreds of men and women in sight whose bare breast revealed such stars of gold, varying in number from two to as many as twenty. This reminded me that Attarokib owed me an explanation about them; and while we were waiting for the concert to begin I questioned him again.

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: You have been looking at your neighbor there and you see that he has some stars. Why not ask him? I know he will be glad to inform you."

I suspected that Attarokib had some special reason for giving me this advice, and I hastened to follow his suggestion.

"Sepsafem to my neighbor: May I trouble you with a question?"

"Aiavizai to Sepsafem: Certainly—it will be no trouble. I shall be delighted to serve you in any way."

"Sepsafem to Aiavizai: I am a stranger here, and curious to know the meaning of these stars that your

people wear upon their breasts. My guide Attarokib suggested that you would be glad to inform me."

“Aiavizai to Sepsafem: He was right and I shall thank him for referring you to me. As for the stars of gold—they indicate in how many lands the wearer is an honorary citizen.”

“Sepsafem to Aiavizai: Please tell me what this means, how such honorary citizenship is attained.”

“Aiavizai to Sepsafem: Gladly. You perhaps know that a new arrival in Kuramala has a month in which to acquaint himself with the new life. During this time he renews old friendships, visits the various places of interest in his land, the parks and the public places. He leaves the borders of his land to visit the Signalling Station, the Hall of Decisions, the Hall of Archives, Hatefat, Aiatavsa, Sibbatmikah, and other places in Niames. Now when all this is over the arrival finds waiting for him an invitation from every nation in Kuramala to visit their land. But while he would like to visit them all he accepts only the invitations of the people whose friendship he deserves—that is, those whose stars he has earned the right and the ability to visit. He spends a month in each land. When he arrives at one of them he is inscribed as an honorary member of the nation—and then a little star of gold appears upon his breast, with the symbol of the nation which it represents.”

“Sepsafem to Aiavizai: Very beautiful. But how can a person living on Earth today do anything to win the friendship of vanished peoples?”

“Aiavizai to Sepsafem: I was about to add that for each star a person has he is granted the right to choose in addition one of the lands of the people who are no longer on Earth. Once a person wears the star

of any people, he may visit that nation’s Kuramalan land, and later on its star, at any time he wishes.”

“Sepsafem to Aiavizai: You mentioned many public places that newcomers to Kuramala visit—some of which I have never heard of. What do they do there?”

“Aiavizai to Sepsafem: They send messages to their friends on Earth from the Signalling Station. To Hatefat and Aiatavsa they go to see both former friends and enemies, for various purposes—. They go to Sibbatmikah because from there they can best watch what their friends and kin on Earth are doing. To the Hall of Archives they go to see the records of what has happened with any person that they ever knew or heard about and in whose history they have an interest. Finally, usually on the last day of

their holiday, they go to the Hall of Decisions, where all their unsettled disputes on Earth are reviewed. After that is done they begin their regular life here, which is marked by their being assigned to some work in the Industrial Center."

"Sepsafem to Aiavizai: You have satisfied me fully concerning the stars of gold. Tell me now, if you please, don't the Kuramalans grow impatient here waiting for the end of the current Earth period when you will be able to return to your native stars and to visit the stars of the peoples in which you enjoy honorary citizenship? It seems to me that you are here as stranded migrants, held up in your journey through the universe."

"Aiavizai to Sepsafem: You have aptly called us stranded migrants. But it is not at all an unpleasant delay, and we have so much to do here that we do not feel impatient. Our remaining in Kuramala is necessary because we did not fulfill all the conditions of our inclayment.

We are all partners in certain group-debts on Earth which we labor to repay here."

"Sepsafem to Aiavizai: Thank you very much for your kindness. I am grateful for the service you have rendered me in telling me all this."

"Aiavizai to Sepsafem: It is I who should be grateful to you, for you have granted me an opportunity to serve you. And now permit me to thank your guide for referring you to me."

My neighbor held a moment's conversation with Attarokib, during which I saw both of their smiling as if they were highly satisfied about something. Then Aiavizai spoke to me again.

"Aiavizai to Sepsafem: Allow me to thank you once more for questioning me. Your friend has just told me which is your star—and I, who never before had anything to do with one of your people, shall now, on account of my slight service to you, be able to visit your people. I am so overjoyed that I can hardly wait for the concert to finish. I shall start out this very day."

I expressed my own pleasure to have been able to render one of the Kuramalans such a valuable service, and then I turned to my guide.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: You have told my neighbor something that I too would like to know—to which star, or to which people, do I belong?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: You must not ask me that. There are some things which, if you found out about them, would make your continued stay

on Earth futile. Your true origin is one of these things. If you learned it, your clay body would die immediately, and you would have to go to Atomelot at once, through the Hall of Awakening, and so on. Incidentally, because in Kuramalan England you would very likely discover

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either that you belong to that people or to which people you really belong if not to the English, we shall not be able to go there."

C5. I did not offer a reply then, for while we were speaking the visiting artist had arrived and taken his place in the pit of the inverted pyramid. I grew aware suddenly of a strain of harmony that came up from the bottom of the great house, and looking down I saw the artist moving deft fingers over the surface of a short single string suspended between two thin posts over a stand. The music that came forth was a spirited dance effect in swiftly changing cadences. A glance around the concert chamber revealed that the people were mostly in the same attitudes as before—some seated on chairs, some lounging at ease on couches, and a few standing near their friends. I received the impression that a concert to these people was just an occasion of enjoyment. I recalled to mind a picture of stiff shirted, uniformly black frocked men seated rigid upon hard chairs near tight-laced women in a London opera house; and I smiled. Or was it the music that made me smile?

The one-stringed instrument had given way to one of many pipes—an organ, out of which our entertainer was drawing a mixed melody of gayety and depression, but mostly gayety. I had never heard such music before. I wondered whether these were original compositions of the performer, or, if not, who were the composers. Four more instruments were made to yield up delicious strains, then once more the performer seated himself at the organ.

Before he began his next piece he addressed his vast audience. To all of us he communicated the wish that we should harmonize with him in his final offering.

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Then he began to play a slow composition of deep feeling, which became livelier by very gradual stages. Suddenly I perceived that a number of people had joined the organist with wondrously harmonious song. Soon

more and more people joined the swelling chorus. One after another the men and women around me, as if moved with profound inspiration, poured forth a contribution to the stream of harmony. I remembered the singing of the stellarians that I had heard is company with Longanim and his friends. Attarokib had already joined the singers. It seemed to me that I was the only person remaining in the great place who was not harmonizing with the organist's chorus; and suddenly, as the music reached a climactic stage, he lifted up his head and looked straight at me, singing and drawing mysteriously meaningful chords out of the great pipes. It was then that the meaning of the music came to me. Hardly aware of what I was doing, I joined the mass of harmonizers. More than five million men and women we were, all contributing our musical harmony to the inspired leadership of some great singing organist from a far off star. It was when I found myself in harmony with all that vast assemblage that I realized that these were no compositions I had heard, but impromptu impulsive outpourings from the soul of a master of melody who had the power to make us all join with him in the expression of his grandiose conception.

The spirit of the music fell. Singly and in groups the inspiration fell from the people. Without knowing how it happened I, too, paused at the proper moment. At last only the lone singing of the organist came to me with the accompaniment of the bells in his instrument. The singing stopped, and then came the final chord from

the organ, soft, sweet, entrancing. The concert was finished.

There was no applause, no encore. The master of music had rendered what he wished to express—that was the concert. The people left their places, some quickly, some leisurely. Attarokib and I were among the last to go, for I had remained awhile under the spell of this glorious experience.

It was not until we had flown over a good deal of space that I spoke to my guide, and then it was not about the concert—for there was nothing to say about it except to praise what could never be sufficiently praised.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: All the people that I have seen in Niames have been alike in one respect—they are of one age. I would not care to say what age it is. Certainly it is youth—yet there is in all the people the dignity and wisdom of age. I take it this is the stellarian state. And I think the absence of the states of childhood, adolescence, middle age and senescence is no

tragedy. I was particularly impressed by the splendid appearance of the Kuramalans in the concert chamber, when I had several millions of them in view at one time."

My guide nodded, as if this remark needed no contribution from him.

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: What do the people do with all their time here? I understand they work one hour a day for their Anozam. But most of them do a year's work in a month, with perhaps from one to three months of extra work. What do they do with all their free time?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Consider the facilities they have for amusing themselves, and you will see that no one

has ever been ennuied in Kuramala, nor ever will be. There are the colleges where all manner of knowledge is exchanged; there are the museums and art centers, which means not only seeing the products of free genius but producing artistic marvels; there are the concerts, where great performers render their music, and where all the people give expression on instruments or in song, to their musical emotions—you have been to a Kuramalan concert, and I think you, for one, would want to spend all your time in the music chambers; there are the clubs and fields of sport; and, if you have the privilege, you can go from land to land and see all these and participate in them in the forms distinctive with each people. You know how the music and dancing and all the arts differ among the nations on Earth. Here the difference is far more intense. And each people cultivates individual arts that no other peoples have. Finally each person has in his own home various resources for entertaining himself and his friends. And when a Kuramalan is not doing any of these things you will probably find him in the Park of Crystal watching his friends and kin in their Earth adventures—you remember seeing thousands of people there, don't you? There are so many interests to occupy one that the question should not be what do the people do with their time but where do they find time to do all these things? And the answer is that the time simply exists. Now, my friend, you have made me deliver several lengthy addresses to you since we arrived in Kuramala. Come with me therefore into that structure yonder and listen to a few addresses by others. You will of course ask what place is that. I forestall you. It is the Hall of Decisions."

C6. To enter this institution we had to cross the border of Kuramalan Siberia, for it was situated at the extreme inner part of the Industrial Center of Mikahes. The Hall of Decisions was a great long structure divided into many alcoves. As soon as I entered I perceived that a stream of communications was issuing freely from every alcove. Approaching one, I gave my attention to the official in charge of the place, who was reading out of a voluminous book to two persons facing him, a man and a woman, while a large group of people stood by. It looked at first like a marriage ceremony. But what the official was reading soon enlightened me.

"And finally, the day that you died," he read, nodding to the man, "you argued with your wife on the subject of which was the proper medicine, the black pills or the white pills, and you were in favor of the black pills, of which you took three, with the consequence that they brought about your immediate death. The decision of the sages is that you were wrong in that argument; the white pills were the proper ones."

"My dear," said the man thus informed to the lady facing him, "I apologize for my absurd stubbornness."

The lady replied with a gracious smile.

"Will the next contestant appear?" the official called out, turning a page in the book.

The lady moved away to make room for a man, who gave his name.

"On this and this day, at this and this time, and at this and this place," read the official to the man who had replaced the lady, "you paused to look into a shop window into which this man, who is now before us to hear all his unsettled disputes decided, was at the time looking. You passed a remark as to which watch in the

display would make a better timepiece, and maintained that it was the one in the blue case. Your neighbor here maintained it was the one with the broad minute-hand. The sages decide you were both wrong, as neither of those watches was any good as a time-piece, being only empty cases without a mechanism inside. There were no other disputes between you two. Will the next contestant come forward?"

The man who had a moment ago replaced the lady now made room for another who, it appeared, had been a close friend of the man whose arguments were being all conclusively settled. Nearly three hundred arguments that they had left unfinished were decided. This kept on until the

official announced that all the disputations of the man before him which he had had with the people who died sooner than he, or between his death and the present time, were decided. And he called for the next person who was ready for this process.

Going from alcove to alcove I learned what happens with each Kuramalan who, on the last day of his arrival holiday, comes to the Hall of Decisions. He meets there every human with whom he had ever argued or disputed on any question, personal, scientific, or ideal, in which no true conclusion satisfactory to both sides had been reached; and the correct decision is read to both parties by the sage authorities who preside in the Hall of Decisions.

Every verbal debate that takes place on Earth is recorded in the Hall of Decisions; and its officials make sure that all who are involved in these argumentations shall meet their opponents in the debate at some time in the Hall of Decisions and learn the truth of the matter, so that it may be considered as a thing finished. A

Kuramalan may be notified at any time that such and such a person with whom he or she had argued at such and such a time and place on this or that subject has arrived in Kuramala and will be present in just so many days at the Hall of Decisions to hear the truth. This is the equivalent of a summons, to the Kuramalan thus notified, to be present himself at the Hall of Decisions on the stated day—for he knows not yet in whose favor the decision will be rendered, if either of them was right.

During the time I spent in the beautiful Hall of Decisions I heard quite a few amazing and curious verdicts rendered on subjects ranging from the most trivial to the loftiest. A newcomer entering the Hall of Decisions finds there most of his friends and associates and relatives, including possibly his wife and mother-in-law, waiting for him. All their unfinished arguments and debates and quarrels are recalled, many of which cause both parties to blush that they had engaged in such trifling verbiage, and a decision is.rendered in every instance—some in favor of the newcomer and others in favor of his predecessors in Kuramala. The person in the wrong promptly concedes the fact in each count, and amity is thus established.

Mixed with decisions on profound philosophical debates are verdicts on what had been the best play in a game of whist; and decisions on a disputed best move in a game of chess come together with verdicts on heated political disputations. I must note that in the majority of arguments between man and wife that I heard decided, the husband was the winner; but in the majority of arguments between persons and their mothers-in-law, the former were bested. The attitude of the debators is sometimes brought up, for one who has participated insincerely

in an argument is under obligation, in some instances, to make redress.

I was at the point of hearing the decision on an argument as to whether blonde or brunette women were the most deceitful when my guide interrupted me.

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Come, my friend, if you will tear yourself away from these endless decisions we shall be in time to see something interesting in one of the lands of Kuramala."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: I am always ready to follow you, though this time I feel reluctant to leave. I wish you had waited another moment before calling me—I should have heard an interesting decision; something about the comparative deceitfulness of fair and fairer members of the fair sex."

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: O, that! No matter. You will return some day and hear it decided. Hardly a day passes when that argument is not brought up here at least a dozen times. People will argue, you know."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: So I hear. Well, then, shall we start? And what land is it to be?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: I am taking you to see the Isle of the Zenomaniacs."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Really! I have observed that there is no sickness in Kuramala, but you seem to have enough lunatics to need a special place for them!"

C7. Attarokib offered no reply to this, probably because we were already nearing our destination and I would soon see for myself. Within another minute we had alighted upon a small island, not at all like the other Kuramalan lands in beauty or attractiveness. There were no parks, no clubs, no public buildings of any sort—merely a few evenly laid out streets on which stood

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rows of a single type of houses; very handsome structures, but not to be compared with those in other parts of Kuramala. There was not a person in sight.

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Well, by the size of the land there are not very many maniacs in Kuramala; and they either like to keep to their homes or are confined there.”

Even while I was uttering this I became aware of a very extraordinary feature of all the houses—they had no doors! I pointed to the houses and looked interrogatively at my guide, who was smiling very slightly.

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: So you have noticed the most conspicuous thing about this land at last! But really you could hardly expect to find the entrances to the houses on the Isle of the Zenomaniacs except in the back.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Is this one of the forms of their lunacy?—But no! there is something odd about all this. Who are the Zenomaniacs? And why are they segregated here?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: The Zenomaniacs are the people infected with such a form of lunacy that on Earth they joined themselves to a foreign people which they considered superior, and tried to conceal the facts of their origin.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: And they are assigned to live in this land?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Exactly. When such a person arrives in his Kuramalan land, he is examined by the judicial representatives of his people. If found guilty of this grevious insult to his kind, he is expelled from the community as a person infected with a most disgusting disease, and sent to sojourn here with others, from all stars, similarly afflicted.”

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“Sepsafem to Attarokib: But I have known persons who changed their nationality for various reasons and who were fine people in all respects.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Mere change of nationality, though wilful, is not taken as a conclusive indication that Zenomania has set in. If there were extenuating circumstances the suspect will very likely be declared uninfected; say when circumstances required mergeance for the sake of a common good, or when there were impelling reasons not of the deserter’s own choosing. So long as being ashamed of his own people did not enter into the considerations leading to the change there is no Zenomania.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Well, then, being sent to Zenomania is no great honor. No wonder the people here prefer to stay indoors.—But what has all this to do with there being no doors in front of the house?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: You understand already that the people sent here are simply renegades. Now don’t you know how a renegade on Earth leaves and enters places?”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: I am afraid my acquaintanceship with renegades is rather limited—”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: I will tell you then. If you had observed renegades on Earth you would have noticed that they who grow ashamed of their own people usually leave them by a back door and they usually join another people through a back door.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: I see. Quite appropriate then, to have only back doors here. But what sort of life do the people lead on this island, since they don’t seem to be very sociable or to have public institutions?”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: I advise you to find out for yourself. Just go around any house and enter it through the rear.”

I was about to follow my guide’s advice—and from the smile on his face I anticipated some surprising discoveries—when a group of people came soaring down and alighted near us. One of them, an official, by his blue uniform, was leading the rest—eight Kuramalans, newly arrived, I judged, from the fact that not one of them had yet a single star upon his breast. He and Attarokib exchanged greetings, and the two were engaged for a minute in conversation. Then the leader of the arrivals returned to his charges and addressed them freely.

“My friends,” he said, “this is the Isle of the Zenomaniacs where you may live. Here on my left is a row of empty houses. Go in and choose each one a house, and I shall have it comfortably furnished for you and arrange to have your Anozam appear here daily.”

The Zenomaniacs, acting as if they were rather embarrassed, immediately went around to the rear of the left side of the street. Within half a minute one of them was back. He spoke to his guide directly, so that I did not hear him, but the guide answered freely.

“You say this place does not appeal to you at all? Well, your examining committee informed you that the only alternative is reinclayment.—You are afraid to be reinclayed lest it lead you into trouble? I know you had

difficulty to free yourself from Earth the last time, but what else can I do? If you don't want to chance reinclayment just yet, live here awhile, until you decide either that you wish to be reinclayed or that it is not so unpleasant here.—Very well, if you prefer, the choice rests with you. Wait until the others are provided for and I shall take you to the Palace of Birth Control."

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By this time two more of the Zenomaniacs had returned. The conversation with their guide was much the same as the first one's. They had determined to choose the privilege of reinclayment in preference to living here. The remaining five were not long in appearing. Four of them announced their resolution to try reinclayment. The other, after long vacillation, decided to stay on the isle. The official assured him that he would be provided with Anozam promptly in any house he would select; and calling to the other seven to follow him, he rose into the atmosphere. Before the group was a mile away the lone remaining Zenomaniac gripped his girdle, and followed rapidly after them.

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: No customers today—you see now why they don't need a large place here."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: I suppose there cannot be much pleasure in living here if so few of them are willing to stay. And that is just what I was going to investigate before that group arrived. Will you come with me or wait here?"

Attarokib chose to wait for me. I walked around to the rear of the houses on the right side of the street and entered the first one. There was not a living soul in it. I tried the next one, and found no one in it. I went down the whole length of the street, and finally tried another street. But there was no sign of life anywhere. I returned to Attarokib.

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Back already? Have you finished your investigations so soon?"

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: Either there's no one living upon this island, or you are having fun with me—and I am inclined to think this is just another exhibition of your sense of humor."

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"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Ah—then you have really completed your investigation. Well, now that you know that no one has ever volunteered to

live here we are ready to go on. The fact is we ought to hurry, for there's little time left."

Again I wondered that my guide should urge me to make haste. I knew that he had an eternity before him. It must be for myself, therefore, as an Earthdweller, that time was short. Since Attarokib offered no explanation I did not question him. Within the moment we were flying at a tremendous speed towards one of the Kuramalan lands, flying, as I already suspected, to the last part of my wondrous adventure.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN
BETWEEN EARTH AND THE STARS

At the castle of Win-Wing—Some curious amusements—A serpent, a parrot, and a bed-bug recite their fables about men—My lively conversation with some dumb creature—The banquet—A fast tour of the world—I am summoned to a Kuramalan convention—The shocking news—Back to Earth.

C1. A short flight over one of the empty spaces separating the borders of two Kuramalan lands, and we alighted once more on the ground of a country of vast extent, the panorama beautiful with palaces and parks and gardens and rivers.

We were in Kuramalan China, Attarokib told me; and in this land, he added, he planned that we should join the inhabitants in a few of their amusements. If they would equal the concert I had attended, I thought, I was due to spend a very enjoyable visit. I therefore followed Attarokib eagerly towards one of the tall castles near the border.

Upon a hanging porch near the top of this typically Kuramalan home sat a very handsome native couple. For ornament they wore upon their bodies only fantastically decorated girdles. The lady was playing upon a

curious wheel-like instrument from which a pretty tune came forth.

Almost as soon as I sighted them the Kuramalan, who seemed to have anticipated our arrival, floated himself gently down and, with a graceful bow, made us welcome.

“Sing-Song to Attarokib and Sepsafem: My home shall have the honor to receive you this day, good friends. Enter, pray, and permit me to lead the way.”

We replied to this pleasant greeting as we followed him into a spacious inner garden. Near a pool in the center stood the lady we had seen before on the porch. Our host immediately presented us to his beautiful mate, the lady Sun-Set, who added her pleasant expressions of welcome to those of her husband. We seated ourselves upon couches in a bower near the colorful pool.

Many servants, of the white guard type already quite familiar to me, were about, unostentatiously beautifying the garden by trimming its trees

and flower beds, by coloring little pagoda-like structures, or by planting new ornamentations. I wondered whether any degree of charm could really be added to this place; but the resourcefulness of the white guards seemed inexhaustible. A few of these servants approached and offered us garlands of fragrant flowers; others served a delicious liquid of Anozam—imported, our hostess told me, from Sibbatmikah.

Lastly we were presented with instruments in the form of short, thin flutes. Following the example of my companions I placed the flattened end between my lips. I tried first to blow into it, but as this produced no results I drew in. The effect was magical. I felt a sweetly aromatic gas coming out of it which, like my friends, I exhaled immediately. The things about me suddenly took

on fresh hues, delightful to behold. As I repeated this process the scene in which I sat kept changing its colors in a gorgeous variety, intoxicating to the sight. A curious and pleasant amusement I thought. Attarokib informed me that it was one of the favorite passtimes of the people of this land.

Gradually, as we relaxed into positions of ease, and when our hosts had made us feel comfortable in the highest degree, I began to question them concerning their life. Our inter-communication, according to a common practice when more than two persons participate in a conversation, was carried on freely.

“You enjoy a vast amount of comfort here,” I remarked. “I have observed no sickness anywhere in Kuramala, no accidents, no shadow of death, no wrong, no climatic extremes—to which you would not be subject if they existed, on account of the constitution of your bodies; and the senses are free and perfect here to appreciate all that is good. You have very able servants, too. I am wondering who they are and what price you pay or have paid for their labor, and for all you enjoy.”

“These, by the way,” my host replied, “are not our servants. They belong to our son, as does this whole palace. Our own home is not so grand. But there is no price upon their services or for anything in the land. Every one here enjoys whatever his status entitles him to, and the instruments for his enjoyment are created by his personal servants who are the beings formed out of his deeds on Earth. That is how our life is ordered here. These white beings build our homes, furnish and ornament them, lay out our parks and

gardens, and beautify and equip them. They are the sources of our numerous forms of happiness here."

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A servant entered and spoke to Sing-Song a moment. The latter excused himself immediately, saying the month's income of the palace had arrived and he was required for a while to order its disposition.

"Our son, who is away on a journey," explained my hostess, "has invited us to stay here, since his home is much superior to ours, and Sing-Song takes care of his interests in the meantime, since they need to be provided for each month."

"But I did not know you had incomes here," I remarked, "and I am really at a loss to understand what you do with them."

"Some of us," she replied, "have incomes of Anozam that we receive regularly. For example, one of the chief sources of my son's income is derived from a trough that he once built near the border of his farm in China so that passers-by could water their animals there. Although the trough has disappeared these two centuries, since the effects of the good it did live on in the descendants of all who benefited by it, and flowers grown from these surviving benefits come constantly to Mikahes, my own son receives a share of them in the form of Anozam. As for what we do with this income, my son sends this Anozam to certain people on Earth whom he desires to favor or to whom he owes debts. Part of it also goes to the national treasury for the payment of national debts to individuals and groups. That, you know, is how people on Earth are sometimes surprisingly lucky. Sing Song has just gone to see to it that the income is properly divided and despatched. He will not be long."

"I am very glad to know that,"I said. "But tell me this. What is the basis of the affection that exists between parents and their children?"

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"Partly" said my hostess, "it is due to the mingling of personality which resulted from the fact that the blood of the child was influenced by the egoes of the parents from whom it was inherited; partly to the gratitude that children feel for the opportunity their parents gave them to go to Earth."

It occurred to me then that the gratitude must often be reciprocal, since, as I had seen in the Salon of Reunion, parents often were reinclayed as the children of their children. When I mentioned this to Sun-Set she added that

in such instances the bond of affection is so much stronger. And she told me that when children enjoy a higher status than their parents, as her own son did, they are able to initiate their parents into their own privileges, and are happy to do so.

Our conversation was interrupted by the return of Sing-Song.

"You were detained?" his mate asked.

"Yes, but not by the division of the income; that took only a moment. I have received news through the Hall of Current Intelligence. Our son is now in Kuramalan Russia. He is participating in a protest which the Russians are holding against preparations by their brethren on Earth to attack our people."

"Let us hope they shall succeed in averting a tragedy," Sun-Set replied.

I asked my hosts to explain what this news meant, and they told me that when one of the peoples of Earth plan to go to war or in any way to wrong their fellows of a foreign nation the Kuramalan people of the nation planning the evil hold meetings of protest and grief, at which they make plans how to warn their nationals on Earth against their proposed crime. This they do by sending strong messages of warning from the Signalling

Station, and by appointing a few volunteers to be reinclayed in the hope that they will grow to maturity on Earth in time to do something to save their people from an error they are sure to regret. The people who essay inclayment for this specific purpose are tinted for it, and sometimes they become the great promoters of peace and international fraternity. I added some words of hope that the kinsmen of my hosts would not suffer an invasion of their land on Earth, with all the horrors that this would mean to them.

"We are not concerned for that alone," Sing-Song replied, "the evil of war is a two-faced blade. There will be no lack of atrocities on the part of our kinsmen if a conflict comes. We ourselves are doing what we can to influence our people to maintain amity with their neighbors. But let us leave that subject. It is well cared for. Sun-Set, have you not invited our guests to the upper stories of our son's palace?"

"I was only waiting for your return," our beautiful hostess replied, and with a nod indicated that she was ready to accompany us.

C2. We rose from beside the delightful pool and entered the palace: that is to say, we entered the space between tall carved posts which stood beneath the palace. This space was arranged like an artificial garden. Between handsome trees I could see a low table, decked with curious viands in fantastic dishes; very fancifully woven carpets were laid around the table. Our host led the way past this spot through an entrance in the bottom of the palace up to the first story.

Several surprises were in store for me here. I found a dozen men and women standing around a large map of Earth, touching various spots on it with their

fingers, talking and laughing the while. As soon as we entered the entire company greeted us gaily. I was urged at once to take a place at the great map, which occupied perhaps three square yards of space.

Following my host's instructions I chose a spot and placed my finger upon it. I had selected the place marked London. As soon as I touched it the map became an animated picture of the city of London, showing streets, houses, people going busily about their affairs on foot and in carriages—in short, the real city in wondrous detail. Expressing my surprise and delight I moved a bit aside and touched Paris. At once the capital of France came in view. The scenes being familiar, I did not pause long but moved on to Berlin. Then suddenly I stretched forth my hand to the coast of Africa at the spot where I expected my own colony to be. I was not disappointed. There was the fort, and the wooden paling, and the parade ground, in the center of which the men were gathered in a large circle, gesticulating excitedly. Were they discussing my absence? I could not tell, nor did I wish to think of it at the moment. I found the island of Nimikahara and located my friend Unatalcus upon it. I played with the ingenius map like a child with a new toy, and was not ashamed at the joy I felt in it. For my companions were all amusing themselves in the same way.

From the map room we ascended to the next story, where we visited a room equipped with many crystal displayers. Here the master and mistress kept pieces of Timestrips which they enjoyed to see again and again either because they were amusing, or fantastic, or reminiscent. Another room on the same story was furnished with several couches. Urged to recline upon one of them, I did so, and was immediately plunged into a mad

dream filled with the most curious caprices to which my own imagination had ever lent itself, and when I arose I could not help laughing at the re-experience of my own flights of ridiculous fancy.

The next story was divided into two rooms. The first was equiped as an ocean parlor, in which I was able to see reflected what was happening in the ocean depths anywhere on Earth; and many were the wondrous creatures and plants, which exist in the vast depths of the ocean, that I beheld in this room. The second room was a theatre of history. One had but to enter it and to think of any historical event, and immediately he was plunged into a realistic enactment of it, side by side with all the characters and objects in it. Not only the past could be thus summoned, but the present and the future as well. One had only to think of a person or place at any future time to have the events connected with it at that time enact themselves immediately. I put the power of this room to only one slight but convincing test. Its name, the theatre of history, caused me to think back upon the earliest days when I was studying history. In an instant I was a boy again, engaged in attempting to play some prank upon the history master, who, catching me at it, was tweaking my ears cruelly when I put at end to it by leaping hastily out of the room. I was tempted to return and see the enactment of Waterloo—for I had always had a great desire to be close to Napoleon. But Attarokib urged me to give it up for the present because our time was fast drawing to a close.

Story over story in the palace we visited, each filled with increasingly wondrous means of amusement and interest. The last, at the spiral top of the palace, was a room in which stood a lone chair facing a very beautiful

colored window. Plainly this window represented the purpose of the room. I hastened over to it and glanced through eagerly, expecting some new marvel I saw nothing but the colorful stains of the window.

It was Attarokib who, perceiving my surprise, informed me why I failed to see anything in it.

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: In Kuramala one can enjoy only the things with which his personality has a contact established. Thus, in the map-room not all the people could see all the lands—they could each see only those lands whose stars they bear. That is why our hosts do not urge us to do any particular things here, for fear one of us may be embarrassed with a disappointment in attempting to enjoy something which his person is not

prepared to appreciate. Plainly, you are not yet prepared to enjoy the mystery which this window discloses to its master. Leave it. Let us return below."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: This is a real disappointment to me. At least may I know what the master sees here?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: Yes. He sees certain parts of Aiahatnig—the park of the Masters of Niames."

"Sepsafem to Attarokib: I remember that I became reconciled in the park of crystal to not visiting Aiahatnig, so I shall not mourn that I cannot see it from a distance either. Let us go down then."

C3. We rejoined our hosts and their other guests in the garden beneath the palace. As we approached, one of the ladies was telling her friends that she had recently received as a gift from her daughter who was living in a different land a very witty family of insects which she had installed in her zoological garden. Much amazed by this remark, I paid careful attention to the replies of

her companions, and I soon knew that many of the Kuramalans had private zoological gardens in which they kept the egoes of birds, animals, insects, reptiles and fish that had lived on Earth in which they had an interest; that the Kuramalans hold frequent discourse with these creatures; and that many an amusing tale is told by them concerning their life on Earth as dumb creatures.

My imagination exhausted itself to conceive what brand of wisdom or wit the lower creatures could dispense which would be as fascinating to the Kuramalans as the conversation indicated. I began figuratively to itch with a desire to participate, if possible, in this amusement, and I hinted as much to Attarokib. The latter referred the matter privately to Sing-Song, who thereupon immediately proposed that the entire company should pay a visit to his son's zoological garden. His suggestion was received with unanimous acclaim. We all entered the park near the castle and walked leisurely through a winding lane, most of us paired in couples. While Attarokib was engaged in a vivacious conversation with Sun-Set—and by her oft repeated laughter I could tell that he was succeeding in keeping her amused, I questioned her mate on the subject of the zoo which we were about to visit.

“My son’s animal-garden,” Sing-Song told me, “is organized, like all such gardens in Kuramala, as a complete animal kingdom. Each group of creatures has its own chief, and the whole zoo has a king. I am sorry that you will be unable to meet the king of our zoo, a lion who was quite recently elected to this post, because he left a few days ago to visit a brother of his who is chief of the lions in a zoo in the land of our neighbors yonder. But I shall introduce you to the most talented members of a few of the group, and have them recite

their best fables for you. I am sure you will find them delightful.”

“Fables?” I inquired. “What fables do the animals here know?”

“I am sorry—I did not know you were unaware of this,” my host replied. “The animals on Earth are intensely interested in the study of human behavior. This is because man is the only creature whose acts they do not understand according to their rules of thinking. Knowing, however, that men are wise, they try sincerely to learn from them, seeking justification for their own behavior in that of man. Many are the sage conclusions which they draw from observing human conduct. These conclusions, with the observations on which they are based, the cleverest of the animals form into fables, quite in the manner that we humans put into fables the lessons we derive from studying the conduct of the animals. What the appointed animal entertainers will recite for us will be such fables—I shall have each render one of the fables which on Earth had been most popular in his group.”

It was a fascinating idea. I could hardly wait until we arrived at the zoological garden. This was a large area, not fenced in, and in which the creatures who inhabited it roamed freely, unconfined in cages. My host told me that it was necessary only to instruct them not to leave the limits of their garden without permission.

Our company seated itself on a pleasant knoll, to which our host summoned a serpent, a parrot and a bedbug! The three took their places before us and the serpent began by reciting in poetic form, so that it is easy

for me to follow its lines of thought, a curious fable which he introduced by the title—

IT PAYS TO LOOK WELL

Sh—sh—sh—sh—s—My venom starts to run
    As soon as I do mention brutish man
    Who keeps beheading us whene'er he can.
And think of what the enmity was spun!
    Because our ancestor an apple gave to Eve!
Yes, this is man! You try to make him clever,
    But he,
    Instead of 'thanks', or paying you a fee,
Becomes your mortal enemy for ever!
    Should we not grieve?
He is our foe, and thinks of us but ill,
And looks to capture us, and kill,
    And make
    The noble name of snake
A synonym for all that's base and hateful;
    However, this is old,
    And we've been told
These brutes are never grateful;
    Yet tree-of-knowledge fruit man has tasted,
    And so we must admit that he is casted
As Earth's most cunning beast,
In West or East.
    Hence,
    We well may learn from man good sense.
Examine we his government elections:
    We see the candidates enwrapt in issues
    Attractive, woven out of lovely tissues,
To stand the test of critical inspections.
    They promise solemnly to all the voters
    To be the public welfare's chief promoters,

To give each voter all he wishes,
Prosperity in golden dishes;
    Which all sounds very fine,
And they're elected.
No sooner this effected
    Then comes the great decline.
The former benefactor thinks but of himself,
Of gathering the pelf;
    The voters he no longer minds
    (He's busy grasping all he finds);
His promises? The hopes that he awoke?
Why they've gone up in smoke!
    'Twas all a masquerade of coloring sublime,
    To hypnotise the victims for a time!

We serpents from this fact
May learn how best to act:
To lure the victims in,
One needs to cultivate an ornamental skin.

We applauded heartily, and thanked the serpent, and then we heard the parrot recite

THERE'S NO LANGUAGE LIKE OURS!

Kia, Kia, Klu!
A professor on the planet Zu,
    Or perhaps philosopher (for say,
Who can tell a Zuman's rightful title?—
They've so many! But to us it isn't vital);
        However, he wore glasses,
    And they
Denote the man who looks and looks
In endless books
        Whose knowledge he surpasses.

By this ’tis sure
    Our man was highly learned, knew what’s what;
    No thing obscure escaped this polyglot,
Each language was to him a sinecure.
    Countless words he blabbed since he was young,
Analyzing every word and phrase,
All the literary yeas and nays,
    Every sound of human tongue;
Defining what in fact they mean,
He came at last to this conclusion very keen:
    That all the lexicons are trash—
    Not worth a smash;
For all the words in every language spoken.
    Or writ or said,
Do this alone betoken:
    “I’m hungry, give me bread!”
In brief, the savant’s cry:
“All languages are doomed to die.
    The sole important word is ‘bread’;
Then why these lexicons, so bulky,
Abridged and unabridged, all hulky,
    Instead
Of one concise reminder:
‘Give me something for my grinder’?”
    And wonderful! All men agree
    With this professor to a T
That matter not what one may speak
He only has in mind his beak!

We parrots should derive from this the moral
That our language, though ’tis only oral,
Excels them all. Devoid of useless clacker,
Our lexicon complete is “Polly wants a cracker!”

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Again we applauded and expressed our admiration. Then we heard the bed-bug:

WITH THE POOR FOREVER!

Once,
It happened in the bedroom of some dunce,
    A gathering was held with much elan,
    While in the crevice of an old divan
Some members of our bed-bug tribe were dwelling
And heard what all those bedfellows were yelling.
    They smelled that this affair was worth a full report,
    And here I render it in short:
The partisans, mere boys and girls, were young,
But flaunting each a sharp and biting tongue.
    Their meeting had a reddish flavor,
    (This hue, it seems, they held in highest favor)
For all the bedroom
On this occasion had been made a red room.
    The nooks and crannies all in red were bright:
        Red ribbons, kerchiefs, ties,
    Red banners, badges, even a red light;
        And the refreshments: chiefly cherry pies!
And everybody spoke of things extremely red,
    Of blood and ire,
    Revolt and fire,
And this is what the comrades said:
    “Each maid and man
    Must fight the rich in favor of the pauper clan,
That all may share alike what’s good to hold.
    For now the world divided is in classes—
    A few are drivers and the rest are asses,
The former having all the gold
    (Apparently a food
    That’s very good)

So that the rich do feed on cakes and jellies
The while the poor must starve on empty bellies.
    Thus life is bleak and dark;
    So kindle, friends, the reddish spark;
A revolution must be bred
And ably led,
    But first let's fight them slyly,
    Stay up at night and bite them spryly;
Our motto shall be hence, to wreck
    And to destroy
    Their work and joy;
In short, to give them pain in their neck
    Until the poor shall own the bag, bla-blah,
    Three cheers for our flag, hurrah!"

We bed-bugs must from this derive
A moral, how we may survive:
Since we're as red as any, it is sure,
Let's stick forever to our good old friends the poor!

C4. Having made manifest our admiration of the wisdom of the bed-bugs too, we left the three groups of our entertainers, but not yet the zoo. We passed through its whole length, greeting and exchanging remarks with many of its inhabitants. Not one of the sallies of these witty creatures but elicited a smile from me, and more than once I burst into laughter outright. I remember especially Arnus, a very, very talkative kitten whose Earthlife had been spent in a Russian manor. We had a hard time taking our departure from her—she was so anxious to tell us all about her Earthlife; and what she recounted was so ludicrous! She told us how she had always envied her mistress because the latter could undress herself!

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"You can hardly imagine how excited I used to get," she said, "seeing my mistress come in from outdoors and remove her fur coat! I wanted to do the same thing and I tried hard enough to undress myself. I used to roll continuously on the floor, and I licked and scratched my fur, and rubbed it against footstools, and doors, and corners, hoping I would discover where the buttons of my fur coat were hidden. But I couldn't do it. I was sure,

however, that my mistress could undress me if she desired; so I used to beg her to do it by rubbing against her legs. When she petted me I often thought she was going to take off my fur coat at last—and how happy I was! What? Why, yes, of course, I'm glad she never took a notion really to skin me; it's fortunate she did not understand my language."

We finally broke away from voluble Arnus, and Attarokib shortly found a treasure of wit for us in Ablac a hairy little Chinese dog who had lived in Paris. He was funnier than the cat; his wisdom was actually stunning.

"Ye do well to consult me about Earthlife," he announced when I asked him what he thought of his past, "for I was a leader of men!"

"Say you so?" asked Attarokib. "And in what way were you a leader of men?"

"I can bring you many witnesses to verify it—I used to run in front of men and show them whither they must go," Ablac replied. I could not help smiling to hear this boast.

"And will you assert that men permitted themselves to be led by a little pup like you?" I asked.

"Trust us little pups for it—we know how to maintain our leadership!"

"Come, tell us how you do it," I urged him.

"O, it is simple," he assured us. "We dogs lead people by running before them until we see which way they are about to turn, and we promptly lead them in that direction by running in front once more!"

"Come, come, now—I see you are no mere word waster," I protested, "Do you mean to assert that this made you a leader of men?"

"Most certainly I do! What's more, we dogs learned this secret of leadership from men. We saw how many humans who were called leaders of men did just that, and caught the scent from them. We saw these leaders always waiting to find out which way the masses of people want to go and then running in front of them in that direction, and by this means they earned the title of Leaders of Men. Now would you deprive me of that title, which I earned by the same means?"

"Touché, friend, he has you there!" exclaimed Attarokib.

Indeed, this clever criticism of our demagogues astonished me no little. I recalled that in every walk of life there are many Leaders of Men such as Ablac pictured—in politics, in religion, in art, in education—leaders who

have nothing to offer their flocks but wait rather to see which way the wind of public sentiment blows before they announce their own attitude and "lead" the people whither the latter wish to go. I stated as much in acknowledgment to Ablac, and granted him as much right to be called a leader of men as any one who smells first whither his followers desire to turn at the crossing and then runs before them. He seemed mightily pleased to have won his point.

"And now Ablac, will you tell me why dogs wiggle their tails so much?" I asked.

"Most assuredly! It is to indicate that whatever our masters say or do is pleasing to us—right or wrong. Our tail-wagging in all directions means 'Yes, no, yes, no; whatever you like, whichever way you turn, rely upon it—we shall always be with you!' "

"Now tell our friend Sepsafem here," put in Attarokib, What makes you dogs such good guardians of your master's possessions?"

"Well, all animals must have at least one quality in which they excel men; it affords us dogs pleasure to know that many men admit they can trust in us more than they can be trusted themselves."

Such were all his answers—sharp, biting, exceedingly clever. Never did his wit depart from him. I wondered no longer that the Kuramalans take so much delight in their zoölogical gardens. I should have enjoyed spending many hours there myself had time permitted. As it was I heard enough to write a volume on the wisdom of the animals.

Reluctantly I bade farewell to the zoo, as Attarokib urged that we had yet much to see this day. But as we were leaving the garden a little somersaulting fish leapt out of a blue pool and addressed itself to us:

"Don't you want an interview with Anun?" he asked. "I represent the water world!"

"Certainly, little one," I replied, for he had addressed himself chiefly to me. "Gladly. What can you tell us that's interesting?"

"You may question me. I will answer."

"It has always interested me to know why fish on Earth have no voice at all. Can you explain it?" I asked.

"Verily, it is a good question, and this is Anun's answer. Living always in water we've never been intoxicated; and so, our tongues having never

been loosened,
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we have not grown verbose, we've remained sober and dumb."

"You speak of your virtue of sobriety with such pride that I take it you hold virtue dear," I remarked. "Tell me then if you fish have other virtues in which you excel men. For I suspect you regard yourselves as our superiors in this respect."

"Indeed, we have our good points, and we know and appreciate them. Because of our virtues we fish were spared in the great floods of antiquity when all men perished."

"Frankly, I can't imagine what other virtues you have in addition to sobriety," I challenged him.

"Anun shall enlighten you then," Anun replied, "concerning this virtue also: that we fish never won ship our goldlsh. They are insignificant among us. We pay no attention to them or to their glitter, whilst you men worship gold and those who have it."

"There is another touch, my friend," exclaimed Attarokib. "Try and refute this."

"But what would you say of a human who possessed both of your virtues—one who drank nought but water and had neither gold nor love for it?" I demanded of Anun.

"We should be obliged to call him a poor fish, and he would deserve the appellation."

I was highly amused at the good humor of the jolly little fish. He had a ready response for everything. I led him on.

"I see you are inclined to swim with every tide. Do you now hold that we humans should have both spirits and gold?"

"Of course you may have them," Anun replied, "but not to the extent of letting them intoxicate you. That is the mistake your ancestor Noah made. As soon
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as he left our watery home for dry land he made himself golden wine and got drunk on it. He should have learned from us never to swallow too big a fish at one time."

"You fish don't realize that wine brings merriment," I suggested, "and you don't know the value of gold because you know nothing about

business."

"Haven't you seen us fishes leap and make merry with somersaults on pure water? And as to business, we know what it is; but unlike you men we have only honest scales!"

"You are a smart little fish, and a good wit," I replied. "I concede with pleasure, my finny friend, that you've been to a good school, and I have enjoyed my conversation with you."

With this I finally left the zoo in company with my hosts and their guests. Attarokib announced that he and I must go on, but Sing-Song and Sun-Set would not hear of it. They had prepared a little feast for us, and they begged us to partake yet for a few minutes of their hospitality. We could not refuse.

C5. The little feast was a sumptuous banquet in the artificial garden under the palace, with musical entertainment by many birds of brilliant plumage whose songs from the trees around were as simple to understand as a folksong, and with a constant, lively discussion. Dozens of unobtrusive white servants served a large variety of delicacies of rare palatability, which we consumed sitting on fine carpets around a table only a foot high, surrounded by gorgeous beds of fragrant flowers.

Our conversation, after a while, turned to my ownself. Many of my fellow guests freely expressed their wonderment that I should have succeeded in reaching the land between Earth and the stars while my clay

body yet breathed. They knew that I had come by way of Nimikahara. They told me much about the wise people of that island.

Someone asked me what thing in Earthlife seemed to me most to be wondered at in the light of what I had seen in Niames. To this I replied, after some hesitation, that the thing most to be wondered at on Earth is that so little of the truth about Niames is known on Earth, that the Earthmen do no suspect themselves to be migrants of the stars, and that the Creator of the universe tolerates throughout thousands of years that billions of people should accuse him of having created a world like Earth, filled with sorrow and suffering and injustice and fear of death when in fact the universe is filled with happiness and striving for greater happiness.

One of the beautiful ladies who sat opposite me remarked, in reply to this, that I was in error to suppose the Creator must suffer this state of

ignorance on the part of the Earthmen for thousands of years, since every seventy-five years or so the entire population of Earth gives place to a new population, and the old generation learns the truth. “In fact” she concluded, “every day a complete generation arrives in Atomelot and learns the truth about itself, rediscovering the knowledge of which it was deprived only for a brief while.”

I was confessing my surprise that I had not realized this truth myself when suddenly I received a message.

“Win-Wing to Sepsafem: Be greeted, my guest. My house is honored to entertain you, and its master sorrows for not being present in person to make you welcome.”

I understood at once that this was the son of Sing-Song and Sun-Set, greeting me from the distant land where he was staying. I replied appropriately, expressing

my regret that I could not meet him personally. There was some communication between Win-Wing and his other guests and his parents. And then Attarokib declared that we must be on our way. Our friends no longer offered to detain us but merrily bade us farewell.

As we soared away I caught a glimpse of this pleasant company. They had formed themselves in a very pretty dance-formation, and they did not keep to the ground of the garden but performed charming birdlike maneuvers in the air.

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: By the way, I did not quite understand what the relationship between husband and wife is here. I have seen ever so many evidences of a strong attachment which exists between the Kuramalan mates, but I don’t understand what motivates any couple here to unite.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: If I asked you to explain instead the meaning of love on Earth I am sure you would be quite helpless to do it. That’s because no one can understand the meaning of love theoretically; and it is useless to discuss it academically. I can only tell you that, compared with love as experienced here, the thing so called on Earth is only a shadowy yearning for the reality.”

Though this did not help me to understand the nature of the affection between the mates of Kuramala, I had to concede the justice of my guide’s assertion that it would be vain to discuss a subject which can be understood only by experience.

C6. Much as I would have liked to go down and examine in detail many of the places over which we passed, Attarokib restrained me. He took me on a long, half roundabout flight over many Kuramalan lands, over

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the countries of modem peoples, of the semi-civilized Earthmen, and of the uncivilized. In spite of the rapidity of our tour I was able to see a good deal of the life of the Kuramalans, of the individual charm of each land, and of the happiness of the people, in which was mingled a grain of anxiety on account of their kinsfolk on Earth.

Among the many curious things that I came across in the lands of the ancient peoples who have disappear ed as units from Earth were large floral sign-posts urging visitors from modern lands not to fail to warn their kinsmen on Earth, through the Signalling Station, to take heed of the dire consequences which followed upon the mutually destructive policies, the wars and international hostilities, of the peoples of antiquity. These consequences, to be sure, were not in evidence in Kuramala; if anything, the lands of the peoples of antiquity were more beautiful than those of the modems. But they exist on Earth in the form of a heritage of many evils; and in the hearts of the Kuramalan units of the responsible peoples they survive in the form of a profound feeling of blameworthiness which causes them to spend as much time as they are permitted in the Industrial Center where they labor to recall the replicas of the evils they left behind them.

My greatest surprise came when we arrived in the lands of the black peoples—black on Earth only, of course, for in Kuramala their forms are like those of any ether people. Their lands, I found, were perhaps the most beautiful and interesting of all; certainly none of the lands of the modem peoples could equal them. It is a matter of wide regret throughout Kuramala that so few have earned the right of honorary citizenship in these lands of the Negroes. Attarokib told me, when I expressed the opinion that the peoples who were inclayed

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in colored bodies were at a disadvantage against their fellows, that this was a voluntary arrangement necessary to carry out the Earth-system properly, and that in different Earth-periods the various star-peoples change roles in being inclayed in the variously pigmented bodies.

Certainly among all the Kuramalan peoples I did not find anywhere one that could be called in any sense inferior. They were different in their character, and these differences manifested themselves in all their arts; but in their capacities as individuals and peoples they were equals in every respect.

We had passed a long way over the coasts of many African Kuramalan lands, and I was lost in my admiration of the palaces, the parks, the gardens, the rivers, and the beautiful inhabitants, when suddenly Attarokib signaled that we were to descend. I followed him down with alacrity, in the meantime extending my sight over the particular land which my guide had chosen to visit, and wondering at the cause of his selection. Was it the extraordinary loveliness of the place? I do not know to what people of the universe I belong, though I believe it to be the English, nor in which land of Kuramala I am likely to be a citizen if I ever go there; but it seemed that if I had my choice I would probably elect this land on the merits of its scenic attractions. Magnificent palaces and charming homes of endless variety—houses in the shape of trees, houses in the shape of birds of gorgeous plumage, houses in countless fantastic designs were set in gardens of matchless beauty. Public centers of recreation, of culture and amusement rose numerously in the midst of vast parks laid out to delight and enrapture the senses. Here and there, the stately forests were broken

by rivers and streams of faintly redolent perfumes sparkling in a myriad colors.

Not for long could I enjoy this glorious vista. As we alighted Attarokib pointed to a group of the inhabitants who were speedily approaching us.

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Here comes a committee to welcome us, my friend, and they shall have some surprising news for you, as I have heard this last minute from the Hall of Current Intelligence—news which you will understand better if I tell you that we are now in the Kuramalan land of the black people whom you govern on Earth.”

There was no time to reflect or to reply, for already the committee of the natives was standing beside us. Their leader, having expressed his gladness that Attarokib and I were visiting their country, assured us that the occasion of my visit was especially opportune because a convention of their people

was then meeting to discuss some important recent developments in the Earthland of their kinsmen. The Kuramalan chieftain of their people had sent this committee to invite me to attend the meeting and to escort me within.

Though uneasy at this intelligence, I assumed a calm befitting the occasion, thanked my welcomers for their courtesy, and expressed my readiness to follow them at once. We arrived shortly at a grand hall of council where quite a few million of the inhabitants of the land were present. In my momentary excitement, in my eagerness to know the exact reasons for this meaningful event, I gave little attention to the beautiful interior of the hall. With Attarokib at my side I approached the presiding chieftain, who exchanged courteous greetings with us. In a few moments I was informed of the occasion of this convention.

An uprising of the natives had taken place in my colony during my fateful absence. Ammunition had been stolen from the arsenal. Armed with the white man's instruments of death the natives had surrounded the post and threatened to exterminate every soul in it.

The Kuramalans had gathered to discuss what they might do to save their savage kinsfolk from the crime they contemplated and to save them from the inevitable vengeance of the British government. This was no uprising of the oppressed against tyranny, no quest of freedom to justify at least the ambition of the rebels; it was only a union of the warriors of many villages for the purpose of plunder and ravishment. Being informed of my presence in the land, the convention had summoned me; and now its president appealed to me as the person who could act most effectively in checking the hostilities and preventing the unnecessary bloodshed, since I had always enjoyed the friendship and respect of the natives of my colony.

I had been sitting peacefully at the foot of a mountain in the calm of a beautiful day when suddenly an avalanche crashed down upon me with impetuous force; this was the effect of the news I heard in the hall of council. Duty to mankind, no less than duty to country, called me to abandon my glorious adventure in Niames even as it was becoming most interesting. There was nothing for me to do but to go back immediately and try to save my men, and the civilian men, women and children dependent upon them, and the blackskinned natives of my colony. The thought that my possibly treasonable absence from my post might be wholly or partially

responsible for the uprising contributed a sharp degree of anguish to my feelings at that moment.

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To this was added another shock when I recalled suddenly that only recently in Mikahes I had sent forth a message in the Signalling Station for a fellow-worker addressed to someone named Langley. Was this not Captain Langley upon whom the command of the post devolved in my absence? I had not realized the significance of that message to myself! And the meeting of the men in the post, which I had seen in the map-room of Win-Wing's castle—was this not a council of defence?

As all these things connected themselves in my mind I looked to my guide for advice. He, as usual, understood all that I felt, and he assured me that he would see me restored to my friends on Nimikahara at once. It was a great blow to me that I should have to give up the Niamesian journey so suddenly; I knew there was much yet to be seen. But I thought the sacrifice would be cheap if my immediate return to Earth would be the means of saving the people of my colony.

Briefly I thanked the Kuramalans for their courtesy and for their trust in me. They in turn wished me Godspeed, and invited me to partake of their hospitality, should occasion offer again, under happier circumstances.

Attarokib and I took our departure then, and we flew at a speed faster than any I had yet experienced. I should not wonder if our rate exceeded fifty thousand miles to the hour. We did not stop until we saw before us the great port of Niames. Here a number of very brief formalities were passed through quickly, Attarokib speaking for me in every instance. Finally all was ready.

C7. "Attarokib to Sepsafem: It has been delightful to help you through the various parts of Niames. I only wish you could have seen more of it. But it matters not. Perhaps we shall have you with us again."

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"Sepsafem to Attarokib: And what shall I say to you, gracious friend? Shall I thank you as if you had courteously told me the time of day?"

"Attarokib to Sepsafem: No, do not thank me. I know no greater happiness than to guide one like you through the mysteries of Niames."

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Then, may I ask you to give me a parting gift? I mean some contribution of your own to my store of knowledge, some morsel of truth which I may recall every time that I will think of you.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: I would gladly do it, but what I would tell you will require more time than we have. I am expecting a signal any moment from Nimikahara—we have set your friends here to signalling to their chieftain Unatalcus. When he replies you will have to go. But I will give you three morsels of truth which I heard a Kuramalan sending to his son on Earth while we were in the Signalling-Station. I commend them to you, for they are excellent.

“First: If you cannot tell the truth, be dumb, and let not your dog be your superior.

“Second: Your heart is your timepiece; it should move your hands only to the right.

“Third: Stand on your knees before the cow to get its milk, but do not bow your head to it.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: These are delectable morsels indeed; I am not likely to forget them.”

At that moment I received the call from Earth.

“Unatalcus to Sepsafem: Be greeted, my friend. I am ready to welcome you back.”

“Sepsafem to Unatalcus: Greetings, wise chieftain. I am coming.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Everything is ready for your departure now. Only you may return this little

flighter to me, since you must not use it on Earth.”

I removed my girdle and restored it to my guide.

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: Now we are about to part, for long perhaps, will you tell me first what is your own status here in Niames? It has been on my mind for some time.”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Did you not know it? I am a stellarian; and some day I hope to receive you upon my own planet. I take turns with many others in guiding the very few Earthmen who ever come here, because it is my greatest happiness. You can’t have failed to notice how keenly I enjoyed the tour with you—especially our visit to the planet Zu.”

“Sepsafem to Attarokib: How well I remember it! And how proud I feel to have been your wife for a short while!”

“Attarokib to Sepsafem: Really, you musn’t remind me of the frightful toothache I had at that time!”

Despite the constriction I felt in my heart on account of our enforced parting—for this omniscient guide had become a very dear friend to me—I could not help laughing at this witty reminder of our hazardous adventure on Zu. We exchanged a final sign of farewell, and I seized the transportational current to which Attarokib pointed. The next moment I was plunging through space toward Earth once more, leaving many mysteries of the wonderful land of Niames atop, but still smiling at my guide’s humorous reference to his unforgetable toothache.

End of ‘Major Sepsafem’s Record
of the Niamesian Adventure.

EDITORS' NOTE

What happened to Major Sepsafem after his return from Niames?

A few concise entries in his diary reveal that he spent a day in Nimikahara while his balloon was repaired; that he had a remarkably successful flight back to his post; that his men were mightily astonished to see his return, since they had taken him for dead; that he struggled valiantly for five weeks, against odds, to pacify the natives, or to restrain them until a ship would arrive and frighten them off with the display of its additional force; that he spent fifteen to eighteen hours daily making a record of his adventure; and that, as he was preparing to write a concluding chapter, the long-expected onslaught of the natives was begun. The remainder of the story is taken from various reports, chiefly those of Captain Langley to the Colonial Office. The natives were repulsed. The Major, determined to capture their chieftains, set out in pursuit of them with twenty men. They were ambushed in sight of the fort, and the Major was struck by a spear. But his body was never recovered. The natives had carried it off.

The following day the ship of Captain Sir Howard Banks arrived. As the Major's uncle, he took his vanished relative's effects with him when he sailed a month later. Among these was the Major's diary. He retired from the service without an explanation within the year.

But one more detail. About six months after these events some traders from the interior brought in a few buttons which were identified as having belonged to the Major's uniform. They had obtained them, they reported, from the wife of a young cannibal chief who had refused to explain where or how he got them.

The End

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